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ABSTRACT

This handbook offers strategies for school principals who have become the primary marketer for their schools. It is designed to help them draw on school and community resources to build a support base of human, material, and financial capital. Much of the material is based on practicing administrators' responses to a survey sent to "Principals of the Year" in all 50 states. Following the foreword, preface, and introduction, 10 chapters present information on understanding the communication process, marketing the school, building school decision-making teams, conducting needs assessments, improving internal communications, involving parents in the school, creating community outreach programs, producing public-relations publications, enhancing media relations, and planning for and managing crises. Nine sample documents are included. (LMI)

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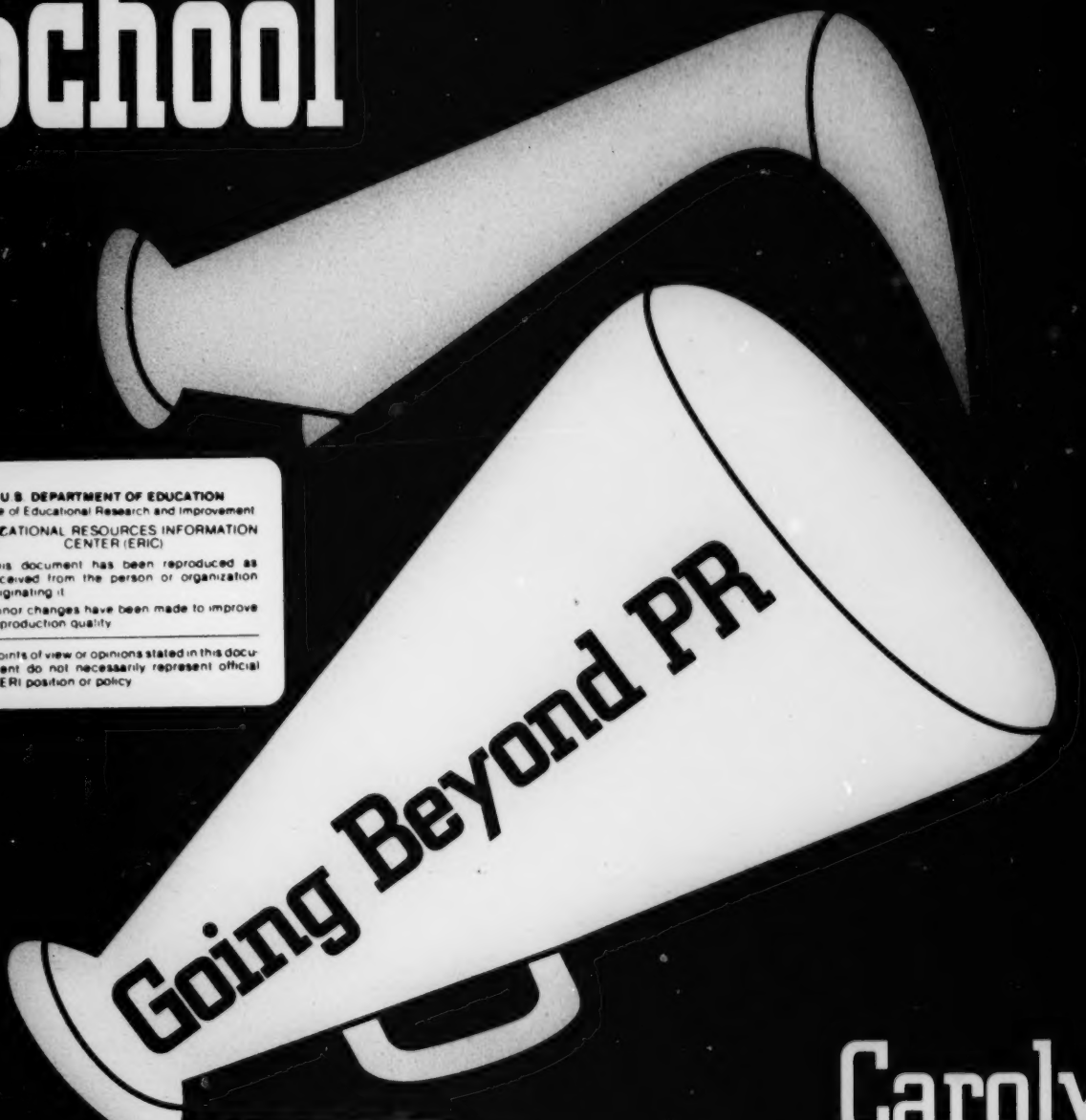

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Carolyn Warner

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Promoting Your School

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This book is dedicated
with equal measures of love, respect, and gratitude
to my mother Mary Tullis Rexroat Kunde,
a teacher and one of the first women principals
in both Oklahoma and California;

to my father Uriah Thomas Rexroat,
Head Teacher of the first public school
in Southwest Oklahoma Indian Territory
and who later served in the Oklahoma legislature;

to my uncle Dr. David Sherman Tullis
and my aunt Beulah Baker Tullis,
great examples of great teachers,
administrators, and human beings.

Promoting Your School

Going Beyond PR

Carolyn Warner

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FOREWORD

"Leadership is facing problems and grasping potential."

President Bill Clinton

America is embarking on a new century—a new millennium—and is making ever-so-hesitant commitments to assure that education, economics, environment, and equity will be more in harmony than ever. If our nation and our people are to succeed in this noble enterprise, one group of people—educators—will have to face more problems and grasp more potential than ever before. This task will fall especially to educational leaders; they will lead the conversion of these principles from concept to reality. They will do so with commitment and dedication, with leadership by example—or not at all. That is why this book is so timely and so important.

Promoting Your School: Going Beyond PR is a book about communication and thus about leadership, pure and simple. Bold, vision-inspired leadership centered on principles of integrity, ethics, and management will alter any organizational system, including that of a school. The central focus of this book is to parallel, support, or increase the skills needed for the leadership that will be required to effect these kinds of change. What you will discover in this book is a practical and reliable compilation of information to help you in your leadership role.

National Association of Secondary Schools Principals (NASSP) and Metropolitan Life have honored me as the first National Principal of the Year, but I know that I am simply representative of the many professionals who are making great strides as change agents. Whether you manage by "walking around" or by identifying sets of objectives, as an effective educational leader you clearly know the difference between theoretical suggestions and models of practicality. This book is the latter, and it will strengthen positive leadership styles and do it in a sensible way by a blending of old and new techniques that both reinforce and accelerate good communications and good marketing strategies.

A significant portion of this book supports many of the good, current practices that emphasize both stewardship and inspiration on the part of administrators. It is encouraging to know that some of the old things still work! But there is so much more here than a simple recitation of the known.

After studying this book chapter by chapter, I believe unequivocally that you will experience growth and acquire an even greater affinity for leadership and the skills of communication, as well as a respect for the author, my friend and colleague Carolyn Warner. She is a leader, a noted supporter of education and educators, and a lifelong learner. Her wisdom is once again shared with educators who are or want to be on the cutting edge and are making significant strides in meeting the needs of their communities and their constituencies.

If you are motivated to lift your inquiry to a higher level and adopt those behaviors that will accelerate change, this book is for you. I believe it will aid you in setting your course of education administration on a road of exploration. For truly, there can be no change without the enthusiasm to explore new techniques for ensuring dedication, expertise, and excellence in yourself and in your team. After all, isn't that what a leader does?

To manage is to be a steward; to be a steward is to lead by example; to lead is to inspire; to inspire is to communicate. Great leaders are exemplary communicators who transfer authority, create opportuni-

ties, and recognize human potential in others for the good of an organization. As principal communicators, these are the goals we must strive and stretch to attain.

All good books should make us think. They should stimulate the mind of the reader and prompt a set of questions. As world changes occur, organizational paradigms are being dismantled and replaced with compatible, flexible, service-based delivery systems. This must be the case with our schools, and those of us who aspire to be school leaders must never cease thinking about how to achieve this most important of goals.

So, let the communicating begin!

Janie Hill Hatton, Principal
Milwaukee Trade and Technical High School
1993 National Principal of the Year

PREFACE

Decentralization. Site-Based Management. Open Enrollment. Choice. Participatory Management. Shared Decision Making. Charter Schools. Vouchers. Total Quality Management. Reform. Restructuring. Collaborative Management.

The list of cures for what ails schools goes on and on and on. Many of the panaceas listed above were not even in the vernacular 10 years ago when the *Nation at Risk* report was published.

Remarkably, what unites almost every school improvement concept is the proposition that genuine education reform can be effected only at the school-building level and only by motivated, dedicated

teachers working in concert with building-level leaders who focus and manage change. All of this means that most of the success or failure of school improvement will rest on the attitude and actions of principals and other local school leaders.

This premise, combined with present and anticipated future financial constraints, means that in the "New American School" of the 1990s and beyond, we can also anticipate the same kind of downsizing of middle management that most major corporations are implementing today. Generally, that will translate into fewer district/central office administrators and support staff and a greater shift of responsibility to the school building, the "production" level of education. Tasks formerly assumed by someone, somewhere, in the superintendent's office will end up in the principal's lap. This does not mean "business as usual, only with more power." This means that the old concept of "top-down" management, whether at the district or the building level, must change—to be replaced by a participatory coalition of interests at the school building level.

Thus, principals are, more than ever before, going to have to be leaders! The fact that principals may lack experience or expertise in many of the duties that are now the exclusive province of the district office is not nearly as important as the ability to absorb and accept the concept of building-level leadership, of the principal's role as principal teacher, principal team builder, principal communicator.

But a principal, no matter how good, is still just one person. One person cannot possibly succeed in meeting this new level of leadership and responsibility without the support and participation of faculty and staff, as well as of the entire community.

You will notice throughout this book that the word *team* is used frequently. That isn't an accident. The "teamless" principal will simply not be around to enjoy the benefits of school improvement—because it won't have taken place in that school. Authoritarian principals who are "do-it-my-way" managers and intend to stay that way will be replaced by collaborative communicators. This is happening in businesses all over America, and education will surely follow the trend.

For the educator who has a genuine commitment to being a facilitator of teaching and learning, who embraces the principles of community and collaboration, and who understands that there is no more "go it alone" in education, there are exciting times ahead. For one thing, educators can expect, and can begin to demand (in a nice, leaderly sort of way), a greater level of genuine involvement on the part of two of the missing links in the education equation for the better part of the last 30 years—parents and the community as a whole, represented

not just by employers but also by retired persons and plain old concerned, interested taxpayers.

One of the strongest arguments for embracing school reform/improvement and for forming coalitions outside the traditional educational community is the harsh reality that there is a sizable and noisy minority in this nation whose agenda involves dismantling, not reshaping, the public school system. Some advocate this dismantling for political reasons, some for religious or social reasons, and others for purely personal reasons.

As is probably true in your own community, the varied, floating coalitions of the anti-public school forces across the nation are united on some issues, divided on others. Whether it is textbook censorship, home schooling, school prayer, creationism, anti-immunization, or taking over school boards—they are there with their own agenda, they are growing in intensity and numbers, and the battles for equality of opportunity for all children are far from won.

There is, however, a factor that schools have, or at least can have, working in their favor that has not always been the case. That factor is the understanding of the private-sector employers in this nation that a well-trained, well-educated, properly motivated workforce is the most powerful asset any company can have—especially if that company wants to be a player in the global economy of the 21st century.

Although we are not exactly in the midst of a revolutionary era of business-education partnerships, we are a lot closer to getting there now than at any time since building a school house and a church was seen by frontier merchants as a signal to all that civilization had finally come to town. American companies today are slowly beginning to understand something that their competitors in Germany and Japan have known for the last 50 years—that there is a solid link between an educated workforce and economic productivity.

What this means to schools and school leaders is that the climate is right to bring in, at ground level, business people who may have the economic resources, management expertise, and/or political clout to play a significant and a positive role in school improvement.

Thus, superintendents and principals and teachers can all anticipate a new environment of parental and community involvement that is both quantitatively and qualitatively improved. There is something quite refreshing about a school climate in which building-level educational leaders, parents, and patrons can work together to actually plan the direction of improvement—and then continue to work together to implement that plan.

What the private sector represents as a macrocosm, individual parents represent as a microcosm of school support. It is even more

simple and more basic. If parents believe that your school (a) is committed to giving their children a quality education and (b) has teachers who are both willing and able to impart the sequential building blocks of knowledge their children will need to succeed in life, then parents will support you, your teachers, and whatever efforts you can demonstrate are necessary to do the job for their children.

Parents who believe their children are getting a quality education will not "vote with their feet" by withdrawing their children from the public school and enrolling them in a nonpublic school—and by lobbying for state funding to pay their tuition. If you honestly and openly involve parents in your efforts to improve your school, they will reward you not only with their time and their support, but with the most precious thing they have—their children.

As it is with the private sector and with parents, it will also be with the community at large. Households that have no school-age children (three fourths of the households in America) need some tangible demonstration of getting their money's worth before they will even consider paying more in taxes to support somebody else's kids.

So, more than ever before, it is Job #1 for schools and school leaders to build and to strengthen the four-way partnership between schools, parents, community, and the private sector. The key to building and keeping a successful four-way partnership is the ability to communicate effectively. The school reform-era educator must be able to successfully communicate the needs, the problems, the goals, the successes, and the educational priorities of his or her school to its varying constituencies—employers, parents, community—who are the stakeholders in public education. The successful educator must be able to enlist the support and the involvement of key elements of these constituencies if the school is to survive in a decentralized educational environment.

What about the negativists? Won't they still be out there raising hell? What about the politicians? Won't they still be calling the shots by controlling the purse strings?

The answer is clear: Neither a cause nor a candidate can survive without a constituency. Although we will never rid ourselves completely of the hatemongers and the fear-filled, and although a democracy will always have its share of self-seeking and downright-dense public officials, if educators with a commitment to the future do their job, the public will respond with its support and public schools will prevail and prosper.

The day is coming when our nation's neighborhood and community schools will be the revitalized engines of the American Dream. When that day arrives, at each one of these schools will be educators who are also leaders and communicators. Will you be there?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Promoting Your School: Going Beyond PR has been very much a collaborative effort. Throughout the research process, I have received enormous and willing assistance from many of the best, most creative minds in education and from a number of esteemed, outstanding educational organizations and enterprises.

In writing this book, I had the advantage of being able to work with two remarkable people: Karen Kleinz and David Bolger. Their diverse talents and high levels of expertise in education and mass communications allowed this book to be written from a number of perspectives—collectively, those of chief state school officer, school public relations specialist, local/state school board member, media

specialist, elected public official, education lobbyist, education consultant, political consultant, parent, business owner, and writer.

The observations and lessons learned from these three collaborative lifetimes were then supplemented with both formal and informal input from some of the most successful building principals (at every level of education) working today in schools all across the nation. From face-to-face interviews, from survey responses, and from informal conversations with these building level leaders, I gained rich understanding into what works (and some wonderful insights into what doesn't!).

To these life experiences and this research were added liberal applications from the marketing and communications literature of the major national professional education organizations. This material alone would constitute a lifetime of both scholarly and practical information.

It is my sincere hope this book will become a much-used guide to communications and marketing concepts, strategies, and techniques that you, as an educational leader, can make your own. I hope this contribution to your efforts will help make your team stronger, your school better, and your job easier.

My sincere appreciation goes to the many principals who so generously shared their ideas, advice, wisdom, and vision. The proven techniques and strategies contributed by these dedicated and experienced men and women make up a good portion of this book. They obviously know what works best because the following contributors have all been honored by their colleagues as Principal of the Year in their respective states:

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Carolyn Warner

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carolyn Warner has gained national stature as one of America's most articulate educational and public policy leaders. A product of pioneering Oklahoma stock, her father was an Oklahoma State Senator, teacher, and newspaper publisher in whose honor the first public school in Oklahoma's Indian Territory was named. Her mother, also a teacher, later served as principal for schools in both Oklahoma and California.

With six children in the public schools, Carolyn and Ron Warner became active parent volunteers and PTA members, and she began her public service career with election to the Phoenix Union High School District Board of Trustees. In 1974 public service became a full-time commitment when she was elected Arizona State Superintendent of Public Instruction. She was reelected to two additional 4-year terms.

During this tenure she became nationally known for her advocacy of educational accountability (both academic and fiscal), citizen participation in educational decision making, the integration of vocational and basic academic skills, and an unparalleled partnership with school administrators, teachers, and business leaders.

As a respected public policy leader, Warner maintains an active role in political and civic activities on both the state and national scene. Drawing on her vast experience in government, education, and communications, she heads her own firm, Carolyn Warner and Associates, which offers consulting, seminar, and lecture services focusing on education, communications, and public affairs.

Carolyn Warner is nationally known as a speaker of uncommon skills, fulfilling 50 to 60 keynote and seminar presentations per year. Her comments and addresses have been featured in a number of national publications and television programs. Her recently published book, *The Last Word: A Treasury of Women's Quotes*, offers public speaking advice for the professional as well as tips on the judicious use of quotations to enhance a presentation.

INTRODUCTION

The intent of *Promoting Your School: Going Beyond PR* is to simplify at least some aspects of the life of 1990s educators by helping them draw on school and community resources to build a support base of human, material, and financial capital.

Although there may or may not be new tax dollars to assist school improvement efforts, good programs at the local building level can still be initiated with a minimal financial investment. With constituency buy-in, the fiscal resources to support a well-thought-out, carefully marketed strategy can be found in almost any community. Parents, business people, and the community at large who know the truth about public schools, about education and educators, have demonstrated a

remarkable willingness to be supportive not only with their time but with their resources as well.

But you have to tell them! You have to communicate with them! You can't be modest. You can't keep the good things about your school a secret to which only educators are privy. The entire community has to be told. Remember, it is up to you to see that the message gets out; nobody else is going to do it for you.

Will it be easy, simple, or painless? Not likely. Things must truly be different. Old habits and mind-sets will have to be broken. "This is the way we've always done it" won't be good enough. The question isn't, "Do I want to do it this new way?" The question is, "How do I do it?"

This book is intended to provide some "here's how you can do it" answers. It is premised on the belief that a successful educational leader must develop effective communications and marketing strategies that will enable every group with a stake in the community to understand and accept their role in making their school a better one.

Throughout this book, the word *marketing* is used. You have to demonstrate to people why they have a stake in the success of the school. You have to show them how they can and why they should become involved. You have to market (sell) your school to the outside constituencies of parents and community and business groups, as well as to the inside groups of students, teachers, and support staff. Every group must be given a reason for caring about what happens to the school. When they ask "Why?" you have to be able to tell them. When they ask "How?" you have to be able to show them. When they ask "When?" you'd better be ready to say "Now!"

No single book can answer every question or foresee every eventuality. But the strategies contained herein can provide you with a map to help you and your team get to where you want and need to go.

Most of these techniques and strategies are drawn from the actual success experiences of living, breathing principals and other educators from schools all across America. Still others are taken from real-world business and political situations in which collaborative, communicative leadership has overcome bureaucratic tradition and inertia.

There are 10 chapters. Each chapter deals with a separate component of communication and marketing challenges and offers strategies for how to meet them. Unlike a novel or a biography, this book is not designed to be read necessarily from beginning to end, or chapter by chapter. Promoting/marketing/selling your school is the only "plot," and there is a certain amount of duplication from chapter to chapter because some basic promotion and marketing techniques obviously apply to more than one strategy or project.

Thus, each chapter is something of a stand-alone "cookbook" intended to provide hands-on strategies, tips, how-to's, lists, and resources of all kinds for reaching and enlisting your essential constituencies. The emphasis is on the practical and the doable rather than the theoretical.

Clearly, every tip and technique will not work for every school. Because some of this information may be "old hat" or didn't work for you, remember it may be new to someone else and may work well in another school environment or community. Also remember: Just because an idea has been around a long time doesn't mean it's not good. This book is written to be used by all kinds of educators: beginning or experienced, of large or small, rural or urban, elementary, intermediate/junior/middle/high schools and districts. It recognizes that educators come to this task with varying levels of expertise in communications and marketing, but that they are united by a common desire to help their school be the best that it can be.

The resources and samples at the end of each chapter were drawn from a wide variety of sources. A survey instrument was sent to "Principals of the Year" from all 50 states and to selected other school administrators—several hundred in all—soliciting items from their arsenal of ideas. Other techniques and concepts were gleaned from school public relations professionals and other communications experts. My goal throughout was to avoid reinventing the wheel and to seek out what works best from the practitioners who are out there marketing their school day in and day out.

Selecting which material to include was a challenging task. The standards were to select those resources/samples (a) that seemed to best represent successful practices, (b) that could be replicated outside their original setting, (c) that covered as wide a spectrum of techniques and approaches as possible, and (d) that could actually be implemented at the building level with building level resources. Every form, sample, example, or model is included in the book for one purpose only: to be used. Permission is granted to readers to copy, modify, and/or adapt any of this material for local school use.

Some chapters have more resource samples than others because some chapters require more than others. One reason so many different strategies and techniques are included is that as more and more school districts embark on the great adventure of school restructuring and improvement, there may be a period of years in which there is no *one* way to do it.

Different school reform/restructuring/improvement techniques require different promotion/communication/marketing approaches. One

of the distinguishing characteristics of education for the rest of this century may be the general understanding that different paths to reform are not only acceptable, but desirable.

Educators have known for years that different children have different learning styles and that there are many acceptable ways to teach. It should be no surprise then that educational policymakers are discovering (often through trial and error) that what works for one school district may not necessarily work for another—and that what really counts is whether or not it works, period!

COMMUNICATION

THE FOUNDATION OF SUCCESS

"If you're the only one who knows something, it's a secret."

In days past, schools did not always need solid communications and public relations programs. The school was there; the teachers were there; parents sent their children; the law said so—and that was it!

Thus the traditional modes of communication from the school to the public—report cards, parent/teacher conferences, calls home when a child misbehaved, open house, flyers announcing special events, a newsletter, sporadic media coverage of special activities—were deemed adequate for keeping the community informed. But today these methods, although

still important pieces of a comprehensive communications plan, are simply not sufficient in and of themselves to build the broad-based support schools need to be successful.

The rightness of your cause aside, people just aren't going to take your word for it any more. Can you blame them for being skeptical in the face of the current, widespread public furor over the crisis in American education? However, it has yet to be demonstrated that, over the long haul, communities will refuse to support a school system that exhibits a solid, measurable commitment to quality.

As a professional educator, you know that in most schools throughout the country most educators are doing a good job with most students. Yet the public's knowledge of and confidence in public education does not always reflect these achievements. It is up to you to be the principal communicator, to make sure your community has the best possible image of your school because it is their school, too. You must strive for constituency "buy-in."

Public schools are sizable financial enterprises. Board members and administrators are responsible for managing large amounts of tax dollars. With that fiscal accountability comes the responsibility of informing the taxpayers (the stockholders in the enterprise of public education) in honest terms about how their money is spent, how their investment is managed, and what return they are getting from their dollars.

The siren song of "no new taxes!" is strong in this economic and political climate of deficit reduction and fiscal restraint. Resistance now to inclusiveness on the part of educators could push the private sector (against its own long-term best interests) into the arms of the anti-public school forces. After all, it is easy to rationalize withholding financial, political, and even moral support from an institution that is not only a tax consumer, but a menace to society and goodness as well.

The school that takes its communications role seriously is the school that will receive the greatest support when a program need arises or a crisis occurs. Public confidence cannot be bought. It must be earned through the daily actions of the entire school family and through a planned communications effort involving the principal as the principal communicator.

The Communication Process

What is communication? It is an exchange of information between people. Information alone does not involve an exchange; it is simply the

act of providing someone with data, a one-way flow. When we communicate with someone, what are we really attempting to do? Most of the time, we are trying to change or mold that person's attitude about something so that it becomes congruent with our own. Information is disposable; it can be presented, reviewed, or discarded—and with no attempt at changing attitudes, it may be simply a one-shot process. But you must make communication and attitude formation a continuous process.

Everyone involved in education is a communicator—a good one or a not-so-good one. As a principal or other educational leader, one of your major challenges is to build a schoolwide team of people who can effectively carry a positive message into the community about your school.

The communication process begins by determining what is currently being communicated about your school and deciding whether or not this is really what you wish to communicate. It then requires developing a strategy with an action plan that targets the opinion leaders within your community. These people will add their own perceptions to what is communicated and share their versions of the information with their constituencies. Local media will either reinforce the communication or add their own interpretation. Parents with students in your school will have their own assessments, as will your faculty and staff. This leads you back to Step 1, and the process begins over again. Once you understand the process of communication, you can begin to build understanding and support for your school.

Dealing With Perceptions

Educators tend to communicate with the public on the basis of facts, when the public does not always care about facts. Most people tend to function on the basis of individual perceptions. Each involved group operates according to a general consensus of what its members perceive. With the media adding its own spin, the public becomes confused and confidence levels toward schools drop.

As an example of perception, suppose two people witness a hit-and-run accident. When the police ask what color the car was, one witness says "gray" and the other says "green." Who is correct? The fact that the car was blue loses out to the perceptions of the witnesses.

Recognizing that perception is often more powerful than reality, how do you address this incongruity, a matter over which you may feel you have no control? First, you try to look at your school from the points

of view of your varied constituencies. When you realize what their perceptions are and understand why they are, then you are ready to plan and work to bring perception and reality closer together.

As in any other major enterprise, good public relations and positive public perception are important keys to a successful school operation. These keys are almost as important to schools as what goes on in the classroom—because they greatly enable schools to be more effective in providing quality education.

Opinion Leaders

There are diverse groups of people involved with the schools. As an educational leader (depending on your position) you at various times deal with:

- Governing board members
- The superintendent and other central administrative staff
- Principals
- Teachers
- Support staff
- Students
- Parents
- Social service providers
- Community members
- Business leaders
- Legislators
- The media

Within most of these groups are individuals who function as opinion leaders. They are the people to whom others in the group turn for information and/or advice. How do you identify these citizens who have a following, who have credibility within the group, be it for their trustworthiness or expertise?

These opinion makers can be any number of informal leaders: the school secretary, the 25-year teacher, the president of the PTA, the local grocer or dry cleaner, the bank vice president. Always be aware that, in one way or another, these opinion leaders have an interest in the schools of their community.

One of the interesting characteristics of opinion leaders is that they are seldom the loudmouths in their group. The person who com-

plains at every PTA meeting is not an opinion leader. An opinion leader, generally, is the one who stands to speak when it is important and one who has a valid statement to make. These citizens are usually activists and positivists, and it is vital that you cultivate their support.

Get the Word Out

In spite of our best efforts to be effective communicators, we aren't always successful in reaching our desired goals. This is true for many professionals, but especially true for educators—for educators tend to be so focused and so dedicated to simply getting the job done that it seems almost unprofessional to be seen and heard "tooting your own horn." This terminal modesty is a dangerous by-product of dedication to the task at hand.

Principal Orin K. Fulton of Agua Fria High School (Avondale, Arizona) doesn't mince words: "Publicize throughout the community your student successes in *everything*—athletics, academics, performance groups, success rates. Don't hide your good qualities—flaunt them!"

Here's a challenge for you:

- Inform the public about your school's programs and activities.
- Build confidence in what you, your faculty, and staff are doing for students.
- Restore the partnership between parents, teachers, and community in meeting students needs.
- Rally support for the total educational program.
- Enrich the home, school, and community by improving educational opportunities for all.

Now that's a tall order. How can you possibly accomplish all of those tasks? Here is a way to begin:

- Identify the image your school presents and the community's perception of your school (Chapter 4).
- Develop a strategic plan (Chapter 2).
- Develop an action plan to implement your strategic plan (Chapter 2).
- Become an educator who communicates and put your plans to work (all the other chapters).

If community members are made aware of the quality work your school is doing in educating their children, they will support your

efforts wholeheartedly. You, students and their parents, faculty and staff, in fact, the entire community will reap the benefits of such a partnership. Confidence in American education will be renewed—step by step, student by student, family by family, school by school, community by community.

Let the communicating begin. . . .

HOW TO MAKE YOUR SCHOOL STAND OUT IN A CROWD

"Knowing where you stand isn't the same as standing out."

What makes your school different from others? Can you clearly define what is special and unique about your school? Can others on the staff? Can your community? In an era of choice and local community involvement through participative management, not only must you be able to define your uniqueness, you must be able to demonstrate it as well.

There was a time when public schools were pretty much created from the same mold. No matter where you traveled throughout the

country, you could reasonably expect to find the same basic program of instruction delivered in the same basic style. Even the school buildings tended to follow the same standard design.

For the most part, it was the private schools that offered specialized programs—some with a religious orientation, some with a college preparatory focus—all designed to appeal to the special interests of parents, if not of students.

As a tool to encourage voluntary school desegregation, public education expanded on the concept of magnet schools, a variation of the private school model. Magnet schools placed special emphasis on a particular academic program, such as science and technology, computers, or the arts to attract students to attend schools outside their own neighborhoods. Although magnet schools have achieved a certain degree of success, they generally lack, by definition, the critical component of a supportive and involved community.

The successful school of the 1990s and beyond will work closely with the community, first to identify that community's most important educational needs and goals, and then, to design a program that meets those needs. The key is to create a dynamic program that also positions the school as an innovative and flexible institution within the community. Anything less will lead to being perceived only as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution.

Improving Your Image

Whether you realize it or not, your school already has an image. You don't have to have a communications plan in place for the public to have a perception of who you are and what you are about. Unfortunately, if you are not actively planning and managing what you communicate about your school, your perceived image could be that of "Just a school, I don't know if it's a good one or not," or even worse, "That's the school you don't want your child to go to."

Images are created (or re-created) by communicating your desire to serve your constituents, working with them openly and honestly to establish a relationship of trust, and consistently delivering the expected product or service. Douglas Pfeninger, principal for 25 years at Dartmouth (Massachusetts) Middle School, acknowledges that his job of marketing is not so hard these days because, "We have developed a reputation as a quality school. My 'selling' is our product over the years."

Now and then, due to the fact that you've done your job well, lightning strikes! Principal John Baldwin of Caddo PM Senior High

School (Shreveport, Louisiana) describes such an experience: "A visit by Hillary Clinton during the primary season resulted in my being named a 'Face of Hope' and being a guest of the Clintons and Gores during Inaugural Week—all of which got us a ton of good publicity."

If your school's image needs improving, it will take planning and patience. A plan is necessary to effectively target your needs, your audience, and your message. It takes time for people to assimilate the new messages you are sending about your school, especially if you must first overcome old, negative perceptions.

Strategic Planning: The Key to Organizational Success

A strategic plan is the step #1 essential for the success of any organization, including a school. You have to have a clear vision of where your organization/school ought to be and of where the stakeholders want it to be. That is what the development of a strategic plan is designed to set down—in clearly understandable language. Once these fundamental strategic determinations have been made, you and your team are then ready to develop the elements of the school strategic plan into the various component plans that will move the school forward.

However (and this is a crucial point), a "set in concrete," lengthy, highly detailed strategic plan is as much an organizational dinosaur as top-down management. A good strategic plan should be a document that is in a state of constant development. Tom Peters (1987), in his book *Thriving on Chaos*, emphasizes that strategic planning is a process, not an end in itself. According to Peters, your strategic plan should have the following characteristics:

- It should involve everyone—the whole team—in its development.
- It should be free of "you can't do that"/"that will never work"/"we've never done it that way" assumptions.
- It should not be set in stone, but flexible and constantly evolving.
- It should be developed on-site by practitioners, not farmed out to planners.
- It should be the subject of vigorous debate and creative thinking by all the stakeholders.

Once you and your team have begun living the strategic planning process, you are ready to develop the working components of your plan. The *hows* of this implementation process are the subjects of the chapters that follow.

One of those chapters (Chapter 4) deals with assessing the climate and perceptions of your school among your internal and external constituencies. This process is treated in its own chapter as a separate entity, but these assessments are obviously an integral part of the strategic planning process as well. You clearly cannot develop overall strategies, let alone tactics, if you don't have an accurate read on climate and perceptions. Like the strategic planning process as a whole, assessment is an ongoing event in the life of a communicating educational leader.

Developing a Marketing Plan

Your overall marketing plan should be considered the next logical step in implementing your strategic plan.

Step 1. With the help of your school team, identify exactly what it is you wish to market to the community. Community perceptions are clearly a driving factor in reaching these marketing determinants. Your end product, obviously, is a well-educated student. But in today's social and economic climate there are many "products" that the community expects schools to deliver. In order to produce these products, there may be a number of services, outcomes, or problems that require the support of the community. Among the products you may wish to market are the following:

- Parent involvement
- Involvement of nonparents
- Volunteerism
- Early childhood programs
- Extended day programs
- Specialized curricula (science, technology, fine arts, vocational education)
- Community/business partnerships
- Substance abuse programs
- Safety programs (gang prevention, "Stranger Danger," "Officer Friendly," weapons control)
- Health education (including sex education and HIV/AIDS information)
- Cultural awareness
- Environmental programs
- Academic achievement
- Adult/community education programs

- Teacher recognition
- Education foundations/scholarship programs

Step 2. Before you can create a plan to market your school and improve your image, you need to find out what people know or don't know about your school. This includes staff and students as well as community members. Design a survey to gather the necessary information so that you can better target your efforts when implementing your plan (see Chapter 4).

Step 3. Identify your primary, or most important, audiences. You may wish to group them into internal audiences (students, staff, volunteers, parent organizations) and external audiences (parents, nonparents, business/civic organizations, clergy, media, legislators). Once you have identified these key groups, you must decide how you can best reach them with your message. Each group may require different information and a different communication strategy. This is targeting your audience and, if applied carefully, will save you time and effort in getting the right message to the right group.

Step 4. Determine how much of a budget you will have to support your marketing efforts. There is no point wasting time developing a creative and extensive marketing campaign if you cannot afford to pay for its implementation. Of course, if you have developed a good plan, you might market it to local employers and solicit business support for funding it. If your plan will yield an identifiable result for x dollars, don't be ashamed to seek out local resources to finance it. More and more businesses realize that good schools are good for business.

Step 5. Decide how you want to position your school in the community. *Positioning* means determining where you stand in relation to other schools and promoting your uniqueness. What is special that your school has to offer students? Parents? The community? Employers? The more generic a product or service is, the more challenging it is to differentiate it from similar products, and the harder it is for the consumer to understand the difference between those providing the same service. With the growing trend of allowing choice within the public school system, you must not only be able to determine what characteristics make your school stand out, but also be able to defend your claims.

Once you have determined your position (or positions), develop supporting messages in the form of a positioning statement or mission

statement to use in communicating with your publics. A positioning statement should be clear and concise and should focus on your unique attributes. (See sample mission statement from Mt. Edgecumbe High School at the end of this chapter.)

Step 6. Set a long-range goal for your campaign and write a goal statement as a guideline for your marketing team. Identify the objectives that will help you accomplish your goal and the action steps needed to achieve each objective. Each objective should support your position and the image that you wish your school to project in the community.

Step 7. Develop your marketing plan. Use the recommendations that you will find in the following chapters to develop your marketing plan into an action plan.

Step 8. Implement your marketing plan. The ideas and suggestions found in the following chapters will help you.

Step 9. Evaluate your efforts in order to determine whether or not your plan is a success. Create a timeline for evaluations as part of the plan. Decide in advance how you will measure your progress. You should review your status every few months or at least once a year. (Remember: Strategic planning and implementation is an evolving, ongoing process.) To what degree have you met your objectives? Is your plan effective? How can it be modified to better meet your needs?

Step 10. Use your evaluation as a starting point to once again analyze what and how you need to market to the community, and begin the planning cycle again. Remember, if you are going to stay on the cutting edge in providing educational services, you must continually revise and adapt to the needs of your market.

Ideas to Help You Get Started

There are an endless number of projects, programs, and events that will support your educational mission and help to enhance your image as well. They are limited by only your imagination and financial resources. Following are some model programs to help you begin to build your plan. All have been successfully implemented by other schools around the nation.

School profile. Prepare a card or brochure that gives a simple profile of your school. Describe the unique features of your school and program, including number of students and staff, test scores, special programs and activities, philosophy, and graduation requirements. This card can be distributed to new students, community members, real estate agents, and can be used by students when applying to colleges and universities. (See profile card sample from Durango High School at the end of this chapter. In its original form, Durango's profile card measures 8½ by 3⅝ inches and is printed on both sides.)

Signs. An area that is often overlooked is that of the signs around your school. Signs are effective message "snapshots." (Even those who complain about billboards read them!) As basic as a sign may seem, it is an important factor in the first impression a visitor has of your school. Do your signs welcome visitors, or do they simply tell them what they must do? Signs should help give visitors an introduction to the friendliness you hope they encounter on campus. If you have a large non-English-speaking population, the signs could be bilingual.

Hang a large map of your school at the entrance door or near the school office. Along with room numbers, include each teacher's name, grade, and photo to personalize it and to help visitors find their way.

Marquees can be used creatively even when you don't have a special event to publicize. Use them to recognize students and staff, to thank volunteers, to ask for help on a project, to display a special thought for the week. Some schools have used quotes so creatively that town residents have written letters saying how much they look forward to the new ones each week.

For special occasions and special announcements, North High School (Sheboygan, Wisconsin) rents mobile lighted billboards and places them in strategic locations on school boundaries.

Lobby showcase. Turn your school lobby and hallways into showcases of student achievement. Have a "Wall of Fame" featuring photos of outstanding students and permanent plaques engraved with their names. Georgetown (Texas) High School has recruited a local supermarket to sponsor their "Wall of Fame" honoring outstanding student achievement.

Make your lobby into a colorful art gallery and announce upcoming displays in the school newsletter. Invite the community to stop in and view the artwork.

A portable bulletin board that can be moved easily to a meeting room, library, hall, gym, or cafeteria (wherever the public will be gathering) is

excellent for promotion. Encourage computer classes to make banners for special events. For the latest in high tech: Dodgeville (Wisconsin) High School utilizes an electric signline/communications board that, of course, can be updated at a moment's notice.

Student recognition. Involving the entire school and community in recognizing and rewarding students is an excellent way to market your school. Academic letters, improvement awards, "Student of the Month" certificates, drawings, bumper stickers—anything that emphasizes student achievement and participation and your school's focus on students is fitting. (Samples are at end of Chapter 5.) Make sure parents know when their children are recognized.

Solicit help from local businesses in providing incentives and rewards for students, such as discount cards, coupons, and certificates. Murray (Kentucky) High School invites the mayor to present keys to the city to its National Merit Finalists.

Off-campus displays. Ask local businesses and public offices to display student work. Offer to decorate their offices with student art at holiday times. Put student-made posters in local storefronts to announce upcoming school events.

Staff in-service. Plan a special staff training about your community and your school's role within it. This is especially effective if your school is located in a large metropolitan area where new faculty and staff may not be familiar with the immediate area, or the relationship between your school and the local community. Emphasize the influential role that individual staff members can play in communicating with specific organizations as well as the community at large to get the word out about your school.

Staff involvement in community. Staff members are most often the first line of information to the community. This is true especially when nonteaching staff are community residents. Their participation in various organizations reflects directly on the school and demonstrates a commitment to the community at large. Encourage and recognize the members of your staff who involve themselves in the community. Everyone who works in your school is important to your marketing success, and everyone must be an informed part of your marketing team.

Key communicators. These are the opinion leaders in your community. Once you have identified them and cultivated their support,

keep them informed through personal contact, special newsletters, or quarterly meetings (preferably all three). Invite them to special events. Call them regularly to update them on issues and concerns impacting your school. Ask their opinions—and listen to what they have to say. These people can be invaluable in quelling rumors and disseminating positive information.

Speakers bureau. Create a school speakers bureau and offer free presentations to local organizations. Include teachers, students, and volunteers who can speak enthusiastically about the school and its specific programs. Participating in state or national education programs will give additional credibility that will cause your speakers to be viewed as experts in the eyes of meeting planners. Following a NASSP-sponsored trip to China, Principal Douglas Pfeninger (Dartmouth, Massachusetts) received numerous speaking invitations from service clubs, church groups, and other community organizations. His presentations on education in the Far East also afforded an excellent opportunity to tout his own school's programs.

VIP program. Once a month invite influential members of the community to spend a morning visiting the school. Consider inviting the mayor, your state legislators, city council members, the Chamber of Commerce president, and outstanding business leaders. Have students meet the VIPs and give them special badges. Provide a tour of the school and lunch with student representatives. Give the VIPs an opportunity to sit in on a class and, if possible, to talk with teachers.

Teacher for a day. Invite community leaders and school patrons to become a "Teacher for a Day" and get a hands-on view of education. Match them with certified staff members who volunteer to host guest teachers. Prior to the actual day of the project, hold a get-acquainted, lesson-planning meeting for the guest teachers and their teacher hosts. Hold a reception at the end of the day to recognize the volunteer teachers and receive their feedback. The proven benefits of this project are increased community support, new respect for teachers and the challenges schools face, a better understanding of the social problems that impact your students, and the creation of new business partnerships as a follow-up to the program. Not bad for a day's work!

Student for a day. Pearl (Mississippi) High School parents are invited to school one day each year to take the place of their child. Parents attend their child's classes and are responsible for all assignments and

class activities. The program has become extremely popular and gives parents an unusual opportunity to find out what is going on.

Community assessment visit. If you are prepared to deal with real input, both negative and positive, invite a team of community members to conduct a critique in the style of an accreditation evaluation. This provides a focused visit for your guests and can also assist in changing community perspective about the daily challenges facing the school. Such a visitation brought a real turnaround in the community's view of Aurora (Ohio) High School. These visitations could be expanded into both facilities audits and performance audits (with respect to the noninstructional business of your school).

Community awareness day. Plan a daylong event featuring the historical background and cultural influences of your local neighborhood community. Invite community elders to share their experiences and local artisans to display their crafts and skills. Involve students in projects such as creating a historical timeline of the community, building something with the materials originally used (such as an adobe house), or reenacting an important community event. Sunnyslope Elementary School (Phoenix, Arizona) climaxed their event by inviting the entire community to a barbecue dinner with entertainment provided by the students.

Cultural/art festival. Highlight the various ethnic cultures represented in your school population with a special festival. Invite parents to assist students in sharing the foods, clothing, arts, and traditions of their backgrounds. Show how each culture contributes to making your school and community unique and special. Mainland High School (Linwood, New Jersey) sponsors a Teen Arts Festival to showcase student talent, during which time the school is open to the public.

Civic projects. Encourage student involvement in civic projects such as recycling, adopting a stretch of highway for litter control, tree planting, and community beautification efforts.

School in the mall. Hold classes in a local shopping mall for a day (perhaps during Education Week). Most people won't visit a school if they don't have children in attendance. By taking the schools to the public, you can reach those who otherwise would not have an opportunity to see education in action.

"Ask the principal" sessions. Once a month set up a table outside a supermarket or other agreeable, high-traffic business (with permission, of course) and be available to chat with community residents. Bring handout information about your school. A variation on this is to walk your local school neighborhood or attendance area periodically, introducing yourself and asking residents if they have any questions or concerns about the school. This variant on "management by walking around" can pay significant dividends in increased community awareness, especially among households with no school-age children.

Community talent bank. Through your community contacts, identify those people with special skills or talents on whom you can call when the need arises. These could be people who are willing to help sew costumes for a play, who may have expertise in writing or producing newsletters, who are able to draw or paint, or who understand public relations, finance, or mass communications. Every community has a resource pool; it is up to your creativity and energy to tap it! Retired persons are often more than willing to help—they just need to be asked.

Place mats. Have students design colorful place mats that include your school name and slogan or other information. Laminate them and find a local restaurant willing to use them or present them to local hospitals, senior centers, and nursing homes.

Senior passes. Offer free school activity and athletic passes to senior citizens in the neighborhood or at a nearby retirement residence.

Real estate breakfast. Invite local real estate agents to breakfast or an open house at your school. Have students assist in presenting a brief program about the school. Provide packets that include information about instructional programs; extended-day options and extracurricular activities; awards received by the students, staff, and school; achievement test scores; school demographics; and school goals and philosophy. Realtors play an important role in marketing your school. You will know you have their support when real estate ads read "Located in _____ school attendance area."

Real estate signs. An extension of enlisting the support of real estate agents is to have signs made for them to hang beneath For Sale signs that read " _____ School Attendance Area: Dedicated to

Education Excellence" (or whatever your slogan or positioning statement is). This helps potential buyers who are shopping for a school as well as a home and assists in marketing your school, too (Glendale Union High School District, Glendale, Arizona).

Welcome Wagon. Invite Welcome Wagon representatives to an orientation at your school. Provide them with school information to hand out to new residents.

Orientation picnic. Custer County High School (Miles City, Montana) welcomes new students and their parents by organizing an orientation picnic or event. If you offer tours of the campus conducted by fellow students, an opportunity to meet informally with staff, and packets of information about your program, new students will feel more at ease, and their parents will view your campus as a hospitable place to visit.

School alumni association. Recruit a high-profile community member who is a graduate of your school to help form an alumni association. The group should be organized to support school programs and activities through the continued involvement of former students. Build a mailing list through class reunion organizers, permanent record files, and advertisements.

Once you have located enough interested graduates, help them form a planning group, establish an organizational structure, survey alumni to find out their needs and interests, and invite others to participate. If the group can provide social activities, recognition, and meaningful involvement in the school, the alumni association will be of tremendous help to your school. Such groups often raise money for college scholarships.

School mascot. Something as simple as the introduction of a school mascot (even at the elementary level) can have a tremendous impact on improving school spirit among students and staff. Hold a contest to select and name the mascot. Find someone who can design and assemble a costume. Announce the mascot's arrival days or weeks ahead to create an atmosphere of anticipation. Before introducing the mascot for the first time, have a series of activities to generate interest among the students. Staff members, parents, or even students could be recruited to wear the costume. You may or may not want to keep the mascot's identity secret, with communication only through gestures or interpreters such as the principal or a teacher.

The mascot could make regular appearances at school and community events and visit classrooms to reward good behavior, academic improvement, and perfect attendance. The mascot could visit classes prior to test week to encourage students to do their best.

A local or student artist might prepare a set of cartoon logos to use on printed materials. The mascot's picture could be put on posters, reward tickets, passes, and so on. A "Principal's Stamp of Approval" might be made up with your mascot's picture. The mascot should be linked to all special programs and events to be a constant theme and motivator for school and students (Rancho Viejo School, Yuma, Arizona).

School slogan. Hold a contest for the slogan that best represents your school. It should be short and catchy and usable on all school materials. Good slogans are easy to remember and reflect the positioning of your school.

Homework/calendar hot lines. Providing telephone hot lines to parents and students is not only convenient for them; it is a real time-saver for your staff. There are a variety of these interactive systems (both commercial and nonprofit) currently in use around the nation. You might find it helpful to study a system that is already on-line and evaluate whether your school would benefit from this technology.

Articles/ads. Send a guest editorial to the local newspaper. Write articles about your business partnerships for publication in their internal publications. Write an article about one of your programs and submit it to educational journals and newspapers. Encourage teachers to submit articles for professional journals as well. Don't be hesitant to toot your own horn in writing. (A listing of key National Education Media Contacts for education associations and publications is included at the end of this chapter.)

Pearl (Mississippi) High School worked in conjunction with the local Chamber of Commerce to run a full-page ad in the state's largest daily newspaper. The ad was informative in nature and extremely effective in bringing to everyone's attention just how important their school is to their community.

Radio show. Radio is an effective way of getting your message out, particularly in small communities with fewer schools or school districts in their broadcast area. If you have your own show, you can be even more effective. This is feasible in smaller communities where stations

are more likely to provide a regular weekly time slot for schools. Businesses that are regular radio advertisers could be encouraged to sponsor such a program. It is an excellent way to share information about local, state, and national education issues, as well as highlighting your own school's outstanding programs and students. In larger communities you can pursue invitations to participate on local talk-show programs or suggest that one of your programs be the focus of a public service feature story (Murray High School, Murray, Kentucky).

Of course, the subject is moot if your school has the problem of Logan-Rogersville High School (Rogersville, Missouri), located in a rural/small suburban area with no local newspaper, radio station, or television station. In such a situation, Principal Emmett Sawyer has found he must rely on issue-specific publications and meetings as his best way of communicating with parents and patrons.

Cable television. Another medium often overlooked is the local cable television network. Most carry some type of educational programming or may be willing to work with you to produce your own show or to provide a constantly running school events/bulletin board/calendar. Your district may even have its own cable station that you can tap into.

References and Suggested Readings

National School Public Relations Association. (1987). *Marketing your schools* (Pocket folder). Arlington, VA: Author.

Peters, T. (1987). *Thriving on chaos: Handbook for a management revolution*. New York: Knopf.

Sherwin, R. M., & Ellis, B. (1989). *Promoting a positive image together*. Paper for Personnel Management Advisory Committee, Oregon Department of Education, Salem.

Sonnenberg, F. K. (1990). *Marketing to win: How you can build your client base in the new highly competitive service economy*. New York: Harper Business.

MT. EDGECUMBE HIGH SCHOOL
Sitka, Alaska

MISSION STATEMENT

Mt. Edgecumbe High School is a paradigm shift in philosophy to the usual high school program. Each curricular area offers innovative teaching methods that not only enhance opportunities for Mt. Edgecumbe High School students, but serve as models for other high schools.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School provides new and important education opportunities for Alaskan students. The school places high expectations on students, administrators, and staff. Program and curriculum are based on a conviction that students have a great and often unrealized potential. The school prepares students to make the transition to adulthood helping them determine what they want to do and develop the skills and the self-confidence to accomplish their goals.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School students are required to pursue vigorous academic programs that encourage students to work at their highest levels. Administrators, teachers, and other staff are required to keep current on educational advances and to initiate innovative, challenging, and stimulating classroom programs and activities.

Teachers and staff analyze issues to anticipate future social and economic needs of Alaska, such as Alaska's economic position among the Pacific Rim nations, and to integrate an educational approach to these issues into the curriculum. A strong curriculum in English, social studies, mathematics, science/marine science, computers/business, career exploration, Asian languages, and physical education is provided.

Special emphasis is placed on the study of both historical and contemporary topics specific to Alaska. Study of the history, culture, and languages of the Pacific Rim is a major curricular area, and to the extent possible, Pacific Rim studies are applied across the curriculum.

Vocational education is stressed through entrepreneurship and work study. Cottage industries are run by students. Traditional vocational education is offered on a limited basis.

Opportunities for leadership, public service, and entrepreneurship are integrated into the program, both during and after regular school hours.

The school prepares students for the academic demands of being away from home and managing time effectively. Some students are selected for admission who are having a difficult time with their local environment. Staff work within available resources to help these students become productive citizens.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School, as a boarding school, offers students a wide range of support activities in both academic and residential programs to assure the success of all students. To facilitate personal growth and decision-making skills, each student is assisted, guided, and challenged to make choices about future academic or technical schooling and alternative methods of making a living. Students are respected for their cultural background and diversity. Students and teachers are encouraged and expected to offer insights to increase the effectiveness of the school.

DURANGO HIGH SCHOOL

2390 North Main
Durango, CO 81301

- *Bobby Wright* ..... *Principal*
- *Jerry Davis* ..... *Asst. Principal*
- *Sandra Francik* ..... *Asst. Principal*
- *Gene Giddings* ..... *Activities Director*

303/259-1630, principal's office
303/259-1634, counseling office

▼ SCHOOL PROFILE

Durango High School is a four-year North Central Accredited comprehensive high school located in the resort community of Durango, Colorado. DHS is the only high school in the Durango 9-R School District with a population of 1,192 students in grades nine through twelve and a faculty and staff of 113. The district also has two middle schools and six elementary schools. The diverse population of students are offered a college preparatory program, as well as courses in vocational education.

Students enjoy learning in one of the most scenic learning environments in the nation which features a variety of historic, recreational and geographic attractions.

▼ ABOUT THE CLASS OF 1992

Sixty-four percent of the students planned to attend either a four or two year college or university. An additional four percent planned to attend a technical/ vocational school.

▼ COLLEGE TESTING

1992 Composite Scores - 152 students tested

ACT	DHS	State	Nation
	22.1	21.3	20.6

1992 Composite Scores - 48 students tested

SAT	DHS	State	Nation
Math	543	507	476
Verbal	492	453	423

*240 students in 1993 graduating class

▼ ADVANCED PLACEMENT

Durango High School offers advanced placement testing in American History, English, literature and composition, French, Spanish and German, physics, and calculus. A total of 126 took advanced placement tests.

▼ SPECIAL PROGRAMS

The Independent Study program challenges the students who score in the 95th percentile on district-approved standardized tests.

The Alternative Education program is offered to students who have demonstrated a need for an individualized program, emphasizing alternative methods of learning.

Students may take courses in post secondary institutions of higher learning. A test out program provides students with an opportunity to test out of a course or courses.

A variety of special education programs insure that all students can realize high school graduation.

▼ GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS CLASS OF 1993

- Each student must have six semesters of full time enrollment.
- Each student must pass a minimum of 149 semester credits in grades, 10-12 to include the following.
- English—22 semester credits as follows:
  - Sophomore English 1&2 or Sophomore seminar 1&2 (10 cr.)
  - Junior English 1&2 or Junior seminar 1&2 (6 cr.)
  - Senior English 1&2 or AP English 1&2 or Bus. Communication or composition (3 credits from any of the above)
  - Speech - 3 credits
- Social Studies—16 semester credits as follows:
  - World History/or honors 1&2 (10 cr.)
  - U.S. History/or honors 1&2 (6 cr.)
- Science—6 semester credits
- Mathematics—6 semester credits
- Physical Education—9 semester credits as follows:
  - Health - 5 semester credits
  - Four semester credits in P.E. Two semester credit waivers may be awarded for each separate interscholastic sport in each year, if approved by the coach in that sport.
- Electives: In addition to the required credits, each student must select sufficient elective courses to complete a total of 149 semester credits for graduation. Therefore, 90 elective credits are required.

▼ GRADE POINT AVERAGE COMPUTATION

GPA and rank are based on grades 9-12. All students are included in class rank, and all regular and honors courses are based on a 4.0 weighting scale. Advanced placement courses equal A-5, B-4, C-3, D-2 and F-1. Physical education is not counted in the GPA.

National Education Media Contacts

Education Associations:

American Association of School Administrators
Jay Goldman, Editor
1801 North Moore Street
Arlington, VA 22209
703/528-0700

American Educational Research Association
Susan Wantland, Publications Director
1230 17th Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-3078
202/223-9485

American Federation of School Administrators
Joe L. Greene, President
1729 2lst Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20009-1101
202/986-4209

Delta Kappa Gamma Society International
Jane L. Posten, Editor
P.O. Box 1589
Austin, TX 78767
512/478-5748

National Association of Elementary School Principals
Lee Greene, Director of Publications
1615 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3483
703/684-3345

National Association of Secondary School Principals
Robert Mahaffey, Director of Publications
1904 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091-1598
703/860-0200

National Education Association of the U.S.
Bill Fischer, Editor
1201 16th Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-3290
202/833-4000

National School Boards Association
Sally Zakariya, Managing Editor
1680 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3407
703/838-6722

National School Public Relations Association
Richard Bagin, Executive Director
1501 Lee Highway, Suite 201
Arlington, VA 22209
703/528-5840

Phi Delta Kappa, Inc.
Pauline Gough, Editor
P.O. Box 789
Bloomington, IN 47402
812/339-1156

Publications:

The Education Digest
(accepts previously published material only)
Kenneth C. Schroeder, Managing Editor
P.O. Box 8623
Ann Arbor, MI 48107
313/769-1211

Education Week
Sandra Reeves, Senior Editor
4301 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Suite 250
Washington, DC 20008
202/364-4114

Teacher Magazine
Blake Rodman, Executive Editor
4301 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Suite 250
Washington, DC 20008
202/686-0800

USA Today
(accepts commentaries only)
Karen Jurgensen, Education Editor
John Bacon, Editor of States Pages
1000 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22229
703/276-3400

BUILDING YOUR TEAM

"Building a better school is a team effort. If you're the only player on the field, don't expect to win."

One of the driving forces behind the move for education reform is the concept of shared decision making. A by-product of the national focus on educational improvement is a renewed interest by the various constituencies of a school in participating in the educational process.

- Staff members are no longer content with the traditional top-down management structure and are demanding the opportunity to have a voice in designing the system within which they work.

- The business community has recognized that if they wish to impact outcomes of education (and the quality of workers available to operate their enterprises), then they must take an active role in the schools where those outcomes are developed.
- Parents desire input into their children's instructional program so that it reflects their family philosophy and values, as well as the academic ambitions they have for their children.

In order to operate effectively within this new school reform/improvement environment, staff, parents, and community members all must have the opportunity for meaningful input into the educational process. Many of the methods schools have long used to communicate with their publics are no longer sufficient to meet today's needs. If these publics are to have valid input and involvement in school and district decisions, they must be informed about the critical issues facing their schools.

Educators face an enormous challenge in changing from a traditional authoritative, top-down management style that controls decision making to one in which all those affected by decisions share in the decision-making process. Shared decision making is not easy. It takes careful planning, strong communications skills, patience, and long-term commitment.

In setting goals and determining school agendas, the successful schools of the 1990s and beyond will be those that include all of their publics, not just those designated as professional educators. By involving all those in the community who have a vested interest in successful educational outcomes, you will be able to tap into many more areas of expertise and create a tremendous resource base to assist your school in preparing students to become productive citizens.

Who Makes Up the Team

Wise educational leaders have long used faculty advisory committees to provide feedback and assist in developing new programs. The advent of effective schools research has led to the formation of school improvement teams with increased responsibilities and a membership expanded to include parents and community members. A significant outgrowth of expanded responsibility at the building level is the formation of school site councils that seek to empower these team members by increasing their involvement in decision-making activities involving such critical areas as budgeting, staffing, and curriculum development—areas long thought to be the exclusive province of professional educators.

There are numerous ways to structure your team. It should be large enough to provide appropriate representation of all groups, yet not so large as to hamper communication and the cultivation of congeniality among its members. Several examples illustrate the wide range of options available:

- School advisory site councils in the Washington Elementary School District (Phoenix, Arizona) are composed of five teachers, one support staff employee, and four parents/patrons. The principal serves as the chairperson and ex officio member. Members apply for the councils and are appointed by the superintendent's administrative council. Appointments are carefully considered to provide a balance of grade-level representation as well as demographic and philosophical orientation, thus ensuring that the council accurately reflects the interests of the local school community.
- Magic City Campus High School (Minot, North Dakota) has emphasized teaming and collaboration through its 2000 Committee, which is working to improve the teaching/learning process and guide the school toward the 21st century. The committee is composed of three principals, three counselors, four teachers, three parents, and one media specialist. (An outline of the Magic City Campus 2000 Committee plan can be found at the end of this chapter.)
- Mt. Edgecumbe High School, a residential school in Sitka, Alaska, is using the Total Quality Management teachings of W. Edwards Deming. Applying the TQM model, the students, staff, and administrators worked together to develop a consensus about the purposes of the school. (Their 15-point model, Modified Deming Points for Continuous Improvement of Education, is at chapter's end.)

Regardless of the structure used, the key is to allow for representation by all interested segments of your school community. Your collaborative efforts will be successful only if you allow for a diversity of opinions and remain open to new ideas and new approaches to problem solving. The most successful teams are able to find common ground and arrive at decisions through consensus building, thus ensuring the continued interest and involvement of team members. Remember: The operative word is *inclusion*.

Successful Teams Communicate Well

No group of people can function as a team unless there is complete and open communication among its members. Effective teams have

developed intensive communications systems that are both formal and informal—and ongoing.

Clearly, two-way communication builds trust among team members by providing the information that they want and need on a timely basis. It allows for feedback and inspires respect, pride, and cooperation among members. When team members are well informed and understand their responsibility for the decisions that lead to change, they are then able to help others in the school community improve student attitude and learning by understanding and adapting successfully to proposed changes.

In order for the members of your school's team to communicate well, they also need to understand how they communicate with each other. As the leader, be sure you periodically make time at meetings to discuss communication techniques and talk about the process of communication used by the team.

You might consider videotaping one of your meetings and analyzing the effectiveness of the team's communication skills. Can you identify the interactions that block progress and those that move the team ahead? Is the atmosphere nonthreatening? Is it supportive? Can you tell from the conversation whether team members have a clear understanding of their goals and what is expected of them, or does there appear to be no direction to the discussion?

People work together best when they understand how their skills and personal needs interrelate with those of other team members and the goals of the school. Once committed to the team concept, members should be able to create a partnership that functions to resolve real issues and provides a sense of accountability for outcomes. It's pretty basic: Buy-in equals ownership.

The Educator as Leader

Even the most dedicated team will fail without a skilled leader to guide it. This leader can no longer be concerned with managing people—giving them specific orders and directions and dictating the course and focus of their efforts. You must instead begin leading your team by creating a shared vision that encourages innovation, creativity, responsibility, and accountability. Along with developing this shared sense of purpose, good leaders also treat team members as valued professionals who have important contributions to make.

Instead of managing and supervising, educational leaders must be coaches and facilitators while at the same time overseeing the planning and implementation of the team's projects. (An Implementation/Monitoring Plan chart to help you get organized and keep on track can be found

at chapter's end.) Leaders recognize that true change must be generated from within the school system, that the best ideas must come up from the classroom, rather than being handed down from above. Leaders strive to create a feeling of ownership of both achievements and problems, as well as a sense of belonging and community.

As a leader, you have the task to help others become comfortable with change and realize their own potential. Learn to identify and cultivate other leaders within your school to assist in mobilizing your community to restructure for the future. True leaders carry a vision that looks beyond the immediate to the future, beyond the probable to the possible.

Larrae Rocheleau, superintendent of Mt. Edgecumbe High School (Sitka, Alaska), admits that after 30 years in education, only a few years ago did he come to clearly and fully understand the difference between a manager and a leader: "A manager works in a system; a leader not only works in the system but also *on* the system."

Defining the Task

In order for teams to be effective, they must first be knowledgeable of their purpose and then have confidence in their ability to accomplish their task. Once teams realize that things can no longer be accomplished in the same old ways, they become more open to the ideas of others—be they superintendents or bus drivers. Today's economy asks that everyone be willing to consider doing more with less, to create new solutions to accomplish both present and future goals.

Successful practitioners of school-level management team building have identified nine challenges to creating successful teams that the educational leader must work to resolve. These are:

- Differences of experience and education
- Value conflicts
- Diverse reasons for joining the team
- Members with single-item agendas
- Lack of trust
- Fear of failure and rejection
- Communication blockers
- Purposeful disruption of team efforts
- Incorporating new members onto the team without a clear rationale for their participation

Getting to Work

Once you have assembled your team and agreed on your purpose, it is time to go to work. There are seven key elements that, followed in sequence, offer the best chance for success. You are basically replicating, in microcosm, the strategic planning process of developing a marketing plan (Chapter 2).

1. *Conduct a needs assessment.* In order to identify your primary goals, you must first assess your needs so that you can plan appropriately. Collect and analyze your data, paying special attention to the differences between current practices and the ideal outcomes desired.
2. *Set your goals.* Make sure all goals are clear and understood by everyone on the team. Determine the measurable indicators of success for each goal.
3. *Develop your improvement plan.* Identify the objectives needed to reach each goal and develop action steps for each. Designate areas of responsibility for team members and develop timelines for the various parts of the plan. Provide training as needed on an ongoing basis.
4. *Implement the improvement plan.* Each team member should be involved and accountable for their assigned responsibilities.
5. *Monitor and adjust.* Review progress on a regular basis to determine the effectiveness of the plan. Adjust your strategy as necessary to maintain the focus of your efforts—and stay on track to your goal.
6. *Evaluate.* Based on your identified indicators of success, did you meet your goals? Use your evaluation to begin the planning cycle again.
7. *Communicate.* Throughout the entire planning process, it is important to communicate not only with the team but with the rest of your staff and community as well. Build support for your efforts by sharing information about the process and the results.

Teams that understand what they have been empowered to do and that have the commitment and administrative support necessary to accomplish their goals will be successful not only in that task but also in establishing the type of community involvement needed to create true educational change and reform—and from within the school, not imposed on it.

References and Suggested Readings

Edwards, M. E. (1990). School community relations for the 21st century. *Journal of Educational Public Relations, 13*(3), 4-7.

National School Public Relations Association. (1991). *Team building 2000* (Pocket folder). Arlington, VA: Author.

National School Public Relations Association. (1993, January). School-based management: Communication is the key. *It Starts in the Classroom*. (Newsletter available from NSPRA, Arlington, VA)

MAGIC CITY CAMPUS 2000 COMMITTEE

Initiated:	Fall of 1992
Composition:	3 Principals, 3 Counselors, 4 Teachers, 3 Parents and 1 Media Specialist
Meetings:	At least once per month
Outcomes:	1. Development of a collaborative team to improve the teaching/learning process at MCC and guide the school toward the 21st century 2. Development of a foundation necessary for MCC to face the future from a proactive stance of high expectations, confidence, and vision
Tentative Tasks/ Timeline:	1. Review and discuss "1979-93 Major MCC Teaching/Learning Programs"—SEPTEMBER 2. Discuss student incentives for academic achievement and attendance—SEPTEMBER 3. Discuss and monitor the 1992-93 "MCC Parent/ School Partnership" plan—SEPTEMBER 4. Discuss and plan the 1992-93 MCC "Authentic Task" staff development program—— OCTOBER 5. Discuss Rich Olthoff's presentation on "Restructuring Schools for the 21st Century"— NOVEMBER 6. Discuss the August-92 MCC staff "Brainstorming for the Future" data—NOVEMBER 7. Evaluate MCC against Fenwick English's "Developmental Staging Plan for Restructuring a School"—to determine where we are as far as restructuring is concerned and thus, where we must go—DECEMBER 8. Discuss, plan, and implement a MCC restructuring program (strategic improvement plan)—JANUARY

SOURCE: Magic City Campus High School, Minot, North Dakota.

Modified Deming Points for Continuous Improvement of Education

1. Create constancy of purpose toward improvement of students and service. Aim to create the best quality students capable of improving all forms of processes and entering meaningful positions in society.
2. Adopt the new philosophy. Educational management must awaken to the challenge, must learn their responsibilities, and take on leadership for change.
3. Work to abolish grading and the harmful effects of rating people.
4. Cease dependence on testing to achieve quality. Eliminate the need for inspections on a mass basis (standardized achievement tests, minimum graduation exams, etc.) by providing learning experiences which create quality performance.
5. Work with the educational institutions from which students come. Minimize total cost of education by improving the relationship with student sources and helping to improve the quality of students coming into your system. A single source of students coming into a system such as jr. high students moving into a high school is an opportunity to build long-term relationships of loyalty and trust for the benefit of students.
6. Improve constantly and forever the system of student improvement and service, to improve quality and productivity.
7. Institute education and training on the job for students, teachers, classified staff, and administrators.
8. Institute leadership. The aim of supervision should be to help people use machines, gadgets, and materials to do a better job.
9. Drive out fear, so that everyone may work effectively for the school system. Create an environment which encourages people to speak freely.
10. Break down barriers between departments. People in teaching, special education, accounting, food service, administration, curriculum development and research, etc. must work as a team. Develop strategies for increasing the cooperation among groups and individual people.
11. Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for teachers and students asking for perfect performance and new levels of productivity. Exhortations create adversarial relationships. The bulk of the causes of low quality and low productivity belong to the system and thus lie beyond the control of teachers and students.
12. Eliminate work standards (quotas) on teachers and students (e.g., raise test scores by 10% and lower dropouts by 15%). Substitute leadership.
13. Remove barriers that rob students, teachers, and management (principals, superintendents and central office support staff) of their right to pride and joy of workmanship. This means, inter alia, abolition of the annual or merit rating and of management by objective. The responsibility of all educational managers must be changed from quantity to quality.
14. Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement for everyone.
15. Put everybody in the school to work to accomplish the transformation. The transformation is everybody's job.

SOURCE: Mt. Edgecumbe High School, Sitka, Alaska.

IMPLEMENTATION / MONITORING PLAN

Implementation				Monitoring					
What Needs to Be Done	Who Will Do It	With What Resources	When	Who Monitors	A/NA* Date	Keep	Stop	Revise	Comments

Evaluation Plan

Design				Results
Evaluation Design Instruments	Data Collection		A/NA* Date	Evidence
	Who	When		

* A = achieved; NA = not achieved.

ASSESSMENTS

ROAD MAPS FOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

"If you don't know where you are, how can you know where you're going."

Before you and your team can decide where you need to go, you first need to know where you are. As an educator, you are quite familiar with the methodology of pre- and post-testing students in order to assess their mastery of skills. Yet when it comes to the programs educators are responsible for leading, all too often plans are based on assumptions.

It is a common aspect of human nature that most people deal more frequently with what they feel rather than what they know. However, you can't plan effective school communications and marketing programs

based simply on your own gut feelings. If you are to achieve solid goals and objectives, then you need solid data as a foundation from which to work. You will not be successful in building public confidence in education and in your school until you have a clear understanding of what the public knows and expects of your school. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, a successful strategic planning process requires an ongoing inflow of information.

There are any number of types of assessments you can use, as well as any number of different methods for conducting them. For example, you might begin by conducting a resource assessment to help you measure the expertise available among your staff and community. This identification of available resources may determine to what extent you can implement your plan.

You might wish to begin with a single topic assessment, one that determines sentiment on one particular issue, such as year-round schooling, AIDS education, or changes in the length of the school day or in the graduation program. This can be invaluable in helping you plot a course of action for issues likely to evoke strong emotions.

A more elaborate project is a climate survey, designed to provide information on how the overall environment of your school is perceived. Because climate is a determining factor in what a school is and what it can potentially become, this is the best place to begin, if you're serious about a continuing process of strategic planning.

Regardless of the topic focus for your assessment, it is important that it provide you with accurate information on which to base subsequent plans, so that you do not waste time, effort, and resources on unimportant issues. Your assessment results will help your team determine areas of strength and weakness, as well as what skills and resources are needed in order to reach your goals. A side benefit is that by asking people for input you've piqued their interest and possibly initiated their involvement and support for your school.

There are five cardinal rules for conducting school assessments:

1. Don't survey if you aren't willing to accept and report the responses.
2. Don't ask for suggestions unless you are willing to take action based on the responses.
3. Don't ask questions that imply promises that are impossible to keep.
4. Don't conduct research for research's sake.
5. Do translate survey results into targeted messages (and use the preferred medium of the target audience to deliver these messages).

Many schools use the NASSP Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments or other prepared surveys available for purchase. You

can study the annual Gallup polls on education (published by Phi Delta Kappa in *The Kappan*) to get ideas. If you happen on a survey from another school or district that fits your needs, ask permission to use or adapt it for your purposes.

There are five assessments at the end of this chapter that will give you an idea of what other schools have done in this area and that will help you to get started. The sample assessments are:

1. Desert Foothills Report Card
2. L'Anse Creuse Middle School North Parent Survey
3. Mountain View School Parent Survey
4. Magic City Campus Parent Needs Assessment Survey
5. The Middle School Concept (Evaluation)

If you live in or near a fairly large city or town you might contact a survey firm (look in the Yellow Pages if you are starting from scratch). Briefly explain your needs and ask to speak to someone who deals in that area. You might obtain a lot of expertise for very little money or even find someone willing to help you pro bono as a community service. Check nearby community colleges or universities for possible assistance from statistics or marketing classes. Mid- to large-size businesses may have research or public affairs departments that could help you or do the work for you. Political party organizations are also good sources of published handbooks on public opinion survey techniques.

Types of Assessments

Questionnaires. The most common assessment form used by schools is the written questionnaire. Because it is generally distributed to a targeted group (for example, to all staff or all parents) with no provisions for a guaranteed return, it will not provide a statistically valid sample, but it will you give you a pretty good feel for what people are thinking. (Any questionnaire designed for a mail-in response should always be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. This will greatly increase your response level.)

Ninilchik (Alaska) Elementary/High School publishes its survey in the newspaper, anticipating that a wider variety of people will see it (and hoping that they will respond). Johnston (Iowa) Senior High asks parents to fill out the survey during spring parent/teacher conferences. Some schools substantially improve their return by offering incentive rewards to the class that comes closest to returning 100% of the surveys.

However, to gather information that is statistically accurate, you need to conduct your survey using random sampling. The most valid way to do this is to hire a firm that specializes in this type of activity. If this is not feasible, consider conducting a random sampling survey by using volunteers. This will furnish a reasonably high level of validity, certainly enough to help you take the pulse of your community.

Phone polls. Conducting a poll by telephone works well for short surveys. You will need to train your volunteers in calling techniques, and it is best to use a random sample to identify whom to call from your target audience.

Both questionnaires and phone polls, although relatively simple to implement, require some specific planning and involve at best a rudimentary knowledge of polling/sampling techniques. Potential sources of assistance, as well as published material, are referenced later in this chapter.

Focus groups. A focus group consists of 10 to 12 members of your target audience who represent the various ethnic, racial, age, economic, and philosophical ranges of your school community. The purpose of the focus group is to find out what feelings are present within that representative group, not the extent to which others hold the same feelings. The group is led through a series of discussion questions by a trained leader. The leader encourages everyone to participate but does not give any personal opinions. It is the leader's job to record responses and ask probing questions that generate discussion among the group. (See Guidelines for Running a Focus Group at chapter's end.)

Opinion maker interviews. These can be very helpful in gaining insight into what influential citizens and opinion leaders think about your school. These should be one-on-one interviews, conducted in a casual atmosphere that allows for two-way communication.

Communication audit. For a complete, accurate, unbiased assessment, a public relations professional can conduct an audit of your total communications system. This audit would evaluate the scope and effectiveness of every means you now use: staff meetings, newsletters, bulletins, parent conferences, radio spots—in short, everything. However, this takes time and money. If your district has a school public relations professional on the central office staff, enlist that person's assistance.

Assessment by walking around (ABWA). A good way to get a "snapshot" of your school on a given day is to do what Principal David A. Kergaard of Kent County High School in Worton, Maryland, did—take time to "visit" your school. Kergaard left the campus, then came back as a visitor and looked at his school through new eyes. He looked to see if the building and grounds were well maintained and whether signs were welcoming and easily visible. Was the office staff friendly and the lobby area inviting? Were the classrooms clean and students on task? Did the staff and students appear happy and enthusiastic? Kergaard points out that "it's the little things that make big impressions on the public—so don't overlook them."

Participation and personal observation. For an unscientific, but commonsense, approach to assessing how others feel about the school, ask yourself these questions: Are the students enthusiastic? Is attendance at a high level? Are disciplinary referrals from the staff at a low level? Do students show pride in their surroundings by using receptacles and picking up after themselves? How easy is it to find faculty volunteers to sponsor nonrequired activities? Do parents chaperone student dances? Are the phone calls received from parents and patrons mostly positive or negative? Do bond issues/overrides/levies usually pass? (Agua Fria High School, Avondale, Arizona).

Student surveys. If you want to get a fresh assessment of your school, you might follow Murray (Kentucky) High School's example and send a follow-up survey to recent graduates. If you can sort through the chaff, you'll get a good idea of how your school looks to an insider. In a simplified form, this survey could also be effective even with elementary or junior high/middle school graduates.

The rumor mill. Although you don't want to lend credibility to rumors and speed them along the local grapevine, you should at least be aware of what is being said, because rumors often can serve as early warning signals that something has been miscommunicated. It is not wise to act on the basis of rumor, but it may be worth investigating to determine the source.

Identify Your Target Audience

Before you begin to draft questions for your assessment, you should first identify your target audience or audiences. Who do you

want to survey? This will help you focus your plan on developing appropriate methods for communicating with each group. You may want to develop several different versions of the assessment and target specific questions to each audience, such as one for staff, one for parents, and one for business and community leaders. Every three years, L'Anse Creuse Middle School North (Macomb Township, Michigan) conducts a separate survey of parents, students, and staff; the survey is given to a different group each year.

Every survey instrument should begin with a letter/memo/notice addressed to the target audience requesting their participation and explaining the reason for the survey. A sample Needs Assessment notice from John Jacobs Site Council can be found at chapter's end. There is also a sample Assessment Participation Letter to Parents from Magic City Campus High School inviting them to participate in an on-campus survey.

Deciding What to Ask

Once you have identified your target audience and the type of assessment you want to use, you need to ask yourself five questions:

1. What exactly do I want to know?
2. Will the information I obtain be useful?
3. How will I use the information?
4. How will I report the results?
5. Who will benefit from my actions?

It is important that assessment questions be designed in a way that does not lead or influence the respondent. Stay objective and keep your questions simple and concise. Close-ended questions give answers to choose from and are easy to tabulate. Open-ended questions can provide interesting and useful data, but will be more time-consuming to interpret and record. Be sure to include demographic questions as well; that is, ask the respondents such typical questions as their gender, age range, educational level, how long they have lived in the community, whether they have children in school, do they work in the community, and so forth.

It is always a good idea to pretest your survey on a small group of people to ensure that the questions are easily understood. If the meaning of a question is subject to several interpretations, the data will be skewed and not very useful.

Collecting Data From Other Sources

In order to build a complete picture, you also should collect other available information about your community. This could include school board election data and other relevant election statistics for your school area and for the community at large. Also you can evaluate census data from your school and district attendance areas to provide demographic breakdowns. (Contact the U.S. Bureau of the Census in Washington, D.C., at 301/763-7662.)

If your school or district has conducted any surveys in the past, get copies of those as well. They could be helpful in identifying trends or changes in your community. By comparing this data, you can form a picture of your school's community and determine how this picture varies from the larger area.

Evaluating and Reporting the Results

Record the date on which the survey is returned to you, and take the time to analyze the information carefully. You may want to enlist the help of a research specialist and break down the results into different groupings using your demographic data.

It is important that you report the results of your assessment and provide information on how you plan to address the needs that were identified. Keep the data you collected close at hand as you begin to plan or expand your communications program. Information that is sitting on a shelf or in a drawer is of no help to anyone and is a waste of human and fiscal resources to gather.

Memorize several of the more important or surprising statistics and take the opportunity to plead your cause when speaking with individuals or to groups. Showing that you have a finger on the pulse of the community as well as the school makes you even more of an expert and adds credibility to your message.

References and Suggested Readings

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DESERT FOOTHILLS
1991-1992 Report Card

As parents of a Desert Foothills student, your input is important. We would like you to complete a report card on how we are doing as a school. The school's Site Council is committed to providing a quality education. This report card will enable us to look at our strengths and weaknesses in planning future goals.

Return the completed report card to your student's reading teacher by Friday, April 10. It is permissible to leave a question blank if you feel you cannot answer it adequately.

SAFE AND ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT	A	B	C	D	F
School is an orderly and safe place					
Student activities are adequately supervised					
School rules for student behavior expectations are fair					
Discipline consequences are fair and consistent					
Discipline on the school bus is fair and consistent					
School buildings and grounds are well maintained					
School climate is positive and conducive to learning					
School administrators are visible and accessible					
Evaporative cooled rooms provide a healthy environment for learning					
Comment: _____					
HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR SUCCESS					
Teachers expect all students to learn					
Teachers hold expectations for achievement consistent with student ability					
Teachers and staff motivate students through caring attitude and recognition					
Teachers and staff respect the dignity and worth of each student					
Comment: _____					
OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN					
Course offerings are relevant and of sufficient variety					
Classroom learning activities are relevant					
Teachers direct and supervise student learning					
Teachers are effective instructors					
Classroom time is productively utilized					
Students learn essential skills					
Homework is given in an appropriate manner					

SOURCE: Desert Foothills Junior High School, Washington School District, Phoenix, Arizona.

Homework assignments are relevant					
Extracurricular sports and club activities are available and accessible					
A set of textbooks at home helps student complete homework					
Comment: _____					
MONITORING OF STUDENT PROGRESS					
Progress reports are informative					
Reports are effective in communicating student achievement					
Parent/Teacher conferences are productive					
Teacher-initiated communications are timely					
Teacher-initiated communications are effective					
Teacher response to parent-initiated communications is timely					
Teacher response to parent-initiated communications is effective					
Comment: _____					
HOME/SCHOOL RELATIONS					
Administrators are effective decision makers					
Student Advisors provide meaningful and helpful services					
Office staff is pleasant and efficient					
Back-to-school mailers and newsletters are informative and comprehensive					
Orientation and Open House activities are informative and productive					
Written information regarding curriculum is informative and comprehensive					
Opportunity exists for parent input to school issues					
Comment: _____					
Your overall grade for Desert Foothills					
Overall grade you think your child would give Desert Foothills					

What is the most pressing problem facing Desert Foothills?

_____

_____

_____

In your opinion what could be done about it?

_____

_____

_____

What is Desert Foothills' greatest strength?

_____

_____

_____

Parents of _____7th grader _____8th grader

L'ANSE CREUSE MIDDLE SCHOOL
NORTH PARENT SURVEY
November 1990

DIRECTIONS: Place an "X" in the numbered box of the answer you select. When a question calls for a written response, use the space provided.

1. How many children do you have attending L'Anse Creuse Middle School North?
   [1] one
   [2] two
   [3] three or more
2. What grades are they in? [MARK ALL THAT APPLY.]
   [1] 6th
   [2] 7th
   [3] 8th
3. How well informed are you about what's happening at Middle School North?
   [1] well informed
   [2] somewhat informed
   [3] not too well informed
4. Where do you get most of your information about L'Anse Creuse Middle School North? [MARK ALL THAT APPLY.]
   [1] my child or other students
   [2] my child's teachers
   [3] my child's counselor
   [4] Mr. Dooley/the principal
   [5] other school employees
   [6] the school's parent newsletter
   [7] the Parent Handbook (calendar)
   [8] self/first-hand knowledge
   [9] newspapers
   [10] Parent Advisory Council
   [11] other (please specify) _____
5. What types of school news are especially interesting to you? [MARK ALL THAT APPLY.]
   [1] how my child is doing in general
   [2] how our school/students compare to others
   [3] what's being taught
   [4] classroom activities
   [5] after-school activities (sports/clubs/etc.)

SOURCE: L'Anse Creuse Middle School North, Macomb Township, Michigan.

[6] growth and development of adolescents
[7] music and art
[8] student success stories
[9] school calendar
[10] information about staff
[11] other (please specify) _____

6. About six times during the school year, the *Middle School North Parent Newsletter* is mailed to students' homes. Have you ever received a copy?
   [1] yes
   [2] no [SKIP TO QUESTION 9]
7. All things considered, would you say the newsletter is . . .
   [1] very worthwhile
   [2] somewhat worthwhile
   [3] not at all worthwhile
8. How, if at all, would you change the newsletter?
9. Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D or Fail to show how well they're doing in school. Suppose Middle School North were graded the same way. All things considered, what grade would you give the school?
   [1] A
   [2] B
   [3] C
   [4] D
   [5] Fail
10. In your opinion, what's the *single* biggest problem at Middle School North?

11. And, on the positive side, what would you say is the *single* best thing about the school?

After each of the following statements, please indicate the degree to which you either agree or disagree. Mark the neutral column if you neither agree nor disagree.

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
12. When I ask a question of school staff, information I receive can be trusted to be complete and accurate.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
13. School discipline is not a problem at this school.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
14. Activities in which parents are invited to participate are usually scheduled conveniently enough that even working parents can take part.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
15. Parents are encouraged to share ideas for school improvement with administration and staff in this school.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
16. The overall purpose, direction and priorities of this school are clear to me.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
17. Student achievements in all areas are proudly publicized by this school.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
18. Class sizes at this school are just about right.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
19. The building and grounds around Middle School North are neat, clean, and well maintained.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
20. The extracurricular programs available to students provide enough variety that there's something for every child who wants to participate.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
21. The district's bus-pass policy is a good idea.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
22. The amount of emphasis the school places on winning is just about right.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
23. The school provides plenty of opportunities for parents to get involved in their child's education.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
24. The Special Education program in L'Anse Creuse is doing a good job of meeting the needs of students with special needs.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
25. School rules are applied fairly to all students.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
26. Students at this school are given opportunities to voice their opinions about what happens at the school.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
27. Teachers at this school expect the best from students.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
28. Administrators at this school expect only the best from teachers.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
29. When students leave this school, they'll be well prepared to enter high school.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
30. Instructional support staff members (counselors, media specialist, social workers, at-risk coordinator, etc.) at this school are courteous and helpful.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
31. Noninstructional support staff members (bus drivers, cooks, custodians, etc.) at this school are courteous and helpful.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Please answer the following questions as they pertain to the *oldest* child you have at Middle School North.

32. Which of the following best describes the average grades your oldest child at the school receives?

[1] A
[2] A- to B+
[3] B
[4] B- to C+
[5] C
[6] C- to D+
[7] D
[8] D- or lower

33. Does your child participate in any of Middle School North's after-school extracurricular activities?

[1] yes [SKIP TO QUESTION 35]
[2] no

34. Why do you think your child *does not* participate in any after school activities?

35. How much time does your child generally spend on homework each day?

[1] none
[2] 30 minutes or less
[3] 31-60 minutes
[4] 61-90 minutes
[5] 91-120 minutes
[6] more than 2 hours

36. Do you think the amount of homework your child is assigned is . . .

[1] too little
[2] too much
[3] just about right

37. How often do you check to make sure your child's homework is complete?

[1] always
[2] most of the time
[3] occasionally
[4] seldom
[5] never

38. Did your child participate in this year's Morley Candy sale?

[1] yes
[2] no

39. Morley Candy sale totals were significantly lower this year than they've been in the past. Why do you think sales were down?

For each of the following, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree. Mark the neutral column if you neither agree nor disagree. Remember to answer questions as they pertain to your oldest child at Middle School North.

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
40. I believe my child's time at school is well used.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
41. I feel free to contact my child's teachers.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
42. Staff at Middle School North seem to be genuinely interested in my child's future.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
43. My child understands school rules.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
44. My child understands classroom rules.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
45. I generally know what my child is learning in school.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
46. The things my child is learning in school will help him/her in life.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
47. I'm generally satisfied with what my child is learning.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
48. My child enjoys school most of the time.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
49. My child feels safe at school.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
50. The report cards and progress reports my child gets from Middle School North provide a clear picture of how well my child is doing in school.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
51. My child's teachers are willing to provide additional help whenever it's needed.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
52. The dittos or copies my child is asked to complete are usually of high enough quality that they're easy to read.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
53. My child is generally satisfied with the variety and quality of food available in the school's lunch program.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
54. I'm satisfied with the bus service provided my child.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
55. My child's teachers are well-qualified to teach and they do a good job of teaching.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
56. Parent-teacher conferences provide valuable information about how well my child is doing in school.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
57. My child's counselor has been very helpful, assisting my child with course selection.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
58. My child has received sound advice and guidance from the counseling staff whenever he/she has asked for it.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

These questions about you and your family will give us a profile of the families we serve.

59. Are you the child's . . .
    [1] mother
    [2] father
    [3] stepmother
    [4] stepfather
    [5] other (please specify) _____

60. Is the household headed by two parents (even if one is a stepparent or a guardian) . . . or by just one person?
    [1] two parents
    [2] two parents (one is a stepparent)
    [3] mother only [SKIP TO QUESTION 62]
    [4] father only [SKIP TO QUESTION 62]
    [5] other (please specify) _____

61. If the household is headed by two people, are both employed at least part-time?
    [1] yes—both are employed
    [2] no—only the father/stepfather employed
    [3] no—only the mother/stepmother employed

62. What's the highest level of education *you* have completed?
    [1] high school not completed
    [2] high school graduate/GED
    [3] some college, technical, or trade school
    [4] technical or trade school completed
    [5] associate's degree
    [6] bachelor's degree
    [7] master's degree
    [8] specialist's degree or doctorate
    [9] other (please specify) _____

63. Have you ever attended a meeting of Middle School North's parent group—the Parent Advisory Council (PAC)?
    [1] yes [SKIP TO QUESTION 65]
    [2] no

64. If you've never attended a PAC meeting, what's the *main* reason you have never participated?

65. Please add any questions or comments you have about the school that weren't covered by this survey:

That concludes our survey. Thank you very much for taking the time to help. Now fold your completed survey and staple or tape it closed. Then please have your child return the survey to Middle School North on *November 13* to receive a candy treat.

MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL
PARENT SURVEY

READING: Reading readiness, word recognition, comprehension, and personal enjoyment of reading.

1. Do you feel your child is learning to read through the Reading Mastery Program?	___YES	___NO
2. Would you like more information on the reading program that we are using?	___YES	___NO
3. Does your child read to you at home?	___YES	___NO
4. Does your child sound out words on his/her own?	___YES	___NO
5. Do you and your child share and talk about books?	___YES	___NO
6. Is your child making progress in reading this year?	___YES	___NO
7. Has the school encouraged an interest in reading for your child?	___YES	___NO

Comments: _____

_____

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH YOUR CHILD'S READING

VERY HAPPY 5 4 3 2 1 VERY UNHAPPY

WRITTEN LANGUAGE/SPELLING: Grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.

1. Are you satisfied with your child's writing at school?	___YES	___NO
2. Do you feel your child is learning to use printing or cursive writing?	___YES	___NO
3. Does your child write stories, letters or notes?	___YES	___NO
4. Is your child using new words in his/her writing?	___YES	___NO
5. Do you feel there has been an improvement in your child's spelling?	___YES	___NO
6. Would you like more information on the writing and spelling programs?	___YES	___NO

Comments: _____

_____

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH YOUR CHILD'S WRITING/SPELLING

VERY HAPPY 5 4 3 2 1 VERY UNHAPPY

MATH: Number concepts, counting, computational skills, and mathematical relationships.

1. Are you satisfied with your child's math program?	___YES	___NO

SOURCE: Mountain View Elementary School, Washington School District, Phoenix, Arizona.

2. Would you like to receive math instruction during the school day with your child? (Family Math) ___YES ___NO
3. Would you rather receive math instruction after school? ___YES ___NO
4. Are you satisfied with your child's progress in math? ___YES ___NO
5. Does your child use math in daily activities such as games, grocery shopping, making change, video arcades? ___YES ___NO

Comments: _____

_____

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH YOUR CHILD'S MATHEMATICAL PROGRAM

VERY HAPPY 5 4 3 2 1 VERY UNHAPPY

MULTICULTURAL: Understanding awareness and respect for likenesses and differences among various cultures within our school community.

1. Do you feel the school has helped your child improve his/her concept? ___YES ___NO
2. Has your child been made aware of the likenesses in people? ___YES ___NO
3. Has your child become more accepting of differences in people? ___YES ___NO
4. Are you more accepting of cultural differences in people due to your child's awareness in school? ___YES ___NO

What do you feel our school could do to help your child develop a better understanding and acceptance of different cultures?

Comments: _____

_____

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH YOUR CHILD'S MULTICULTURAL PROGRAM

VERY HAPPY 5 4 3 2 1 VERY UNHAPPY

STUDY HABITS: School work at home.

1. Does your child bring home homework? ___YES ___NO
2. Can your child complete homework in a reasonable length of time without becoming frustrated or bored? ___YES ___NO

   (If no, please comment)

3. Are you satisfied with your child's study habits? ___YES ___NO

Comments: _____

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH YOUR CHILD'S STUDY HABITS

VERY HAPPY 5 4 3 2 1 VERY UNHAPPY

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS:

1. Are you satisfied with your child's overall academic progress?	___YES	___NO
2. Are you satisfied with your child's social and emotional progress?	___YES	___NO
3. Do you feel that your child is a success in school?	___YES	___NO
4. Does your child share his/her school experiences with the family?	___YES	___NO
Are they positive?	___YES	___NO
5. Do you believe an extended school year program would be beneficial to your child's learning (Year-Round School)	___YES	___NO
6. Would you be interested in investigating the possibilities of year-round school?	___YES	___NO

Comments: _____

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH MOUNTAIN VIEW'S APPROACH TO ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

VERY HAPPY 5 4 3 2 1 VERY UNHAPPY

PARENT PARTICIPATION: Parent involvement and home/school relationships.

1. Do you feel the following school communications are informative and interesting to receive?		
A. Newsletter	___YES	___NO
B. Letters written by children themselves	___YES	___NO
C. Letter from classroom teacher	___YES	___NO
D. School programs (back to school night, recitals, plays, etc.)	___YES	___NO
E. Personal contacts	___YES	___NO
F. Student Newspaper	___YES	___NO
G. Visitations to school	___YES	___NO
H. Telephone calls from teachers	___YES	___NO
I. Other—please specify _____		
2. Are you informed of school events in a timely manner?	___YES	___NO
3. Have you felt included in school activities such as, P.T.O., barbecues, and student programs?	___YES	___NO
4. When you volunteer your time, do you feel your time is valuable to: Students___ School ___ Teacher____?	___YES	___NO

5. Do you feel welcome when you come to Mountain View School? ___YES ___NO
6. When you call do you feel your concerns are handled in a courteous manner? ___YES ___NO
7. Do you review information about upcoming events? ___YES ___NO
8. In place of school sales would you be willing to donate a tax deductible amount of money to the P.T.O.? ___YES ___NO

If yes, please circle amount of money you would be willing to donate
$10___ $15___ $20___ $25___ Other_____

Comments: _____

_____

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION
VERY HAPPY 5 4 3 2 1 VERY UNHAPPY

_____

PARENT EDUCATION: If the school provided the following classes which would you be interested in?

	INTERESTED IN ATTENDING	
Parenting Skills	___YES	___NO
Reading Classes for Adults	___YES	___NO
Graduate Equivalent Degree (GED) Day_____ Night_____ class	___YES	___NO
English as Another Language	___YES	___NO
Child Growth and Development	___YES	___NO
Children's Literature	___YES	___NO
Family Math–Family Reading	___YES	___NO
Nutrition Health and Hygiene	___YES	___NO
HIV/AIDS Education	___YES	___NO
Alcoholics Anonymous	___YES	___NO
Money Management	___YES	___NO
Foreign Language	___YES	___NO
Narcotics Anonymous	___YES	___NO

Please list any suggestions you may have for classes:

_____

_____

Comments: _____

_____

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH OUR APPROACH TO PARENT EDUCATION
VERY HAPPY 5 4 3 2 1 VERY UNHAPPY

_____

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Grade level of your child PRE. K 1 2 3 4 5 6

How long have you been at Mountain View? _____ Years

Have you visited your child's classroom during the school day? __YES __NO

Did your child attend pre-school? __YES __NO

If yes, which one? Headstart_____ Praise_____

How long? _____

DISCIPLINE:

1. Have you read the school handbook? __YES __NO
2. Are you familiar with Make Your Day (MYD)? __YES __NO
3. Do you believe Make Your Day (MYD) is effective with child/children? __YES __NO

Comments: _____

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH THE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PROGRAM

VERY HAPPY 5 4 3 2 1 VERY UNHAPPY

FOOD SERVICES:

1. Are you satisfied with the quality of food service at school? __YES __NO

If not, please make suggestions.

Thank you very much for your time and commitment in completing this survey. On our part we pledge to make good use of your responses.

MAGIC CITY CAMPUS
Parent Needs Assessment Survey
1992-93

Please fill out this form at your earliest convenience and return to Magic City Campus, 1100 11th Ave. SW. It is extremely important that educators seek and use input from parents as they collaboratively attempt to provide quality education for all students. Thank you!

Assessment Key
(Circle appropriate response/share additional comments):

A = Excellent	D = Poor
B = Good	F = Failing
C = Average	X = Don't Know

---

1. The school building, supplies, and maintenance are: A-B-C-D-F-X

Comments:

---

2. The counseling staff is: A-B-C-D-F-X

Comments:

---

3. The curriculum (courses offered; educational activities provided students) is: A-B-C-D-F-X

Comments:

---

4. The principals (administrative staff) are: A-B-C-D-F-X

Comments:

---

5. Services to parents are: A-B-C-D-F-X

Comments:

6. Services to students are: A-B-C-D-F-X

Comments:

7. Student activities (clubs, organizations, etc.) are: A-B-C-D-F-X

Comments:

8. Student discipline is: A-B-C-D-F-X

Comments:

9. The teaching staff is: A-B-C-D-F-X

Comments:

10. My overall assessment (evaluation) of Magic City Campus is: A-B-C-D-F-X

Comments:

SOURCE: Magic City Campus High School, Minot, North Dakota.

The Middle School Concept

Royal Palm school is organized as a middle school with students assigned to a team. Each team consists of a reading, English, math, science, and social studies teacher. Teachers teach five classes, have an individual preparation period, and meet daily during a team planning period. The purposes of the team planning period are as follows:

1. Increase the number of parent/teacher and parent/student conferences to discuss academic and behavioral progress.
2. Increase the number of teaching units that integrate all subject areas.
3. Increase the teacher/teacher communication concerning students and their needs.
4. Increase the number of phone contacts to parents to share student progress.

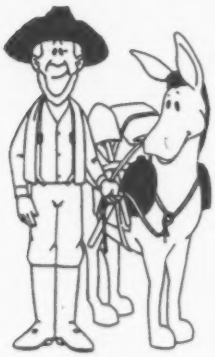
What suggestions do you have for enhancing or changing the current middle school concept now being offered?

SOURCE: Royal Palm Junior High School, Washington School District, Phoenix, Arizona.

Guidelines for Running a Focus Group

1. Approximately 10-12 individuals makes a manageable group. Try for a mixed composition.
2. The physical setup of the room is important. Use a round or square table. Refreshments are a nice touch.
3. Your group should meet from between one to one and one half hours.
4. The first few minutes are crucial. Use an icebreaker and have people introduce themselves. Establish an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable to talk. Set ground rules for participation. You can get off topic easily in first 10 minutes. Show leniency at first and accept something that may be off topic to build group confidence and set tone.
5. Tape the group session.
6. Assure anonymity.
7. The Board is truly interested in their opinion. Ask open-ended questions.
8. You want an honest response from everybody so don't let one person dominate.
9. Ask for comments from quiet members, such as, "What do you think about that, Mary?"
10. Don't agree or disagree. Say "thank you" without giving away your position.
11. There is no need for agreement. Two radically different ideas can be expressed. The object is not consensus. We are looking for perceptions, not the truth.
12. Probe for depth. Ask for clarification. Play down personal stories, get to the heart of the topic, such as "We have not got enough time to hear everyone's personal stories even though that would be interesting. Could you please summarize your idea in one sentence?"
13. There are three kinds of group personalities: the good group co-operates; the nice group says nothing; the loud group is opinionated.
14. The biggest risk is to lead the witness. You must be neutral. You are not there to defend the Board.
15. Start with a basic awareness of the topic and expand on it. Always check to see if anyone has anything to add before moving on to the next topic.
16. End the group with, "What would be the one message I could take back to the Board?"

SOURCE: Director's Office, East York Board of Education, East York, Ontario.



JOHN JACOBS SITE COUNCIL
NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Education Is a Good Prospect!

The goals of the John Jacobs Staff and Site Council include providing the best education for our children, meeting your needs as a family, and promoting good communication among the school, home, and community. Join us as partners in working toward achieving each of these goals.

Please complete this needs assessment and return it to the school in the attached envelope. If you have more than one child attending John Jacobs fill out one survey completely. Please fill out additional Academic Sections for each child. Each student returning a survey to their homeroom or the office will receive a reward and will have his/her name put in a drawing for a gift certificate. If you do not have children attending John Jacobs, return the completed survey to our school office or mail to this address.

John Jacobs Elementary
14421 N. 23rd Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 95023

Grade of the student _____

How many years has (have) your
child(ren) attended John Jacobs? _____

I do not have any children attending John Jacobs. _____

JOIN US!

SOURCE: John Jacobs Elementary School, Washington School District, Phoenix, Arizona.

Assessment Participation Letter to Parents

February 16, 1993

Mr. and Mrs. John Doe
23 Parkway
Minot, North Dakota

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Doe:

You are one of two hundred Magic City Campus families invited to provide parent input into the Minot High School focus on fostering school improvement. It would be appreciated if *one* parent from each of the invited families meets with us on *Wednesday, February 24*. Other school-oriented groups providing input into this important process include students and educators.

All participants in the school improvement process will fill out two assessments. The parent assessments will take approximately an hour to complete and include the following:

—a *School Climate Survey* of 55 items to assess the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents about 10 characteristics of the school and its members

—a *Parent Satisfaction Survey* of 58 items to assemble parent perceptions on nine dimensions of school operation and services

The assessment timeline includes working with Minot High School staff on Feb. 23, parents on Feb. 24, and students on Feb. 25. In an effort to enable invited parents to be a part of this significant school improvement project, two times have been scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 24:

—2:30 p.m. in the Magic City Campus Theatre

—7:00 p.m. in the Magic City Campus Theatre

Once all the assessment data has been reviewed to identify perceived strengths and weaknesses of the school, goals will be developed and action plans written to move the school in the desired direction. Please accept our school's invitation to become involved in this important educational endeavor. We'll see you on February 24!

Sincerely,

Mike Gessner
NCA Lead Teacher

Sincerely,

Richard J. Olthoff
Principal

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

"Before you can sell the customers, you have to sell the sales force."

You've heard, "Bricks and mortar don't make a school; people do." The way your school is perceived by the community is due primarily to the image presented ("made") by the people in it—by your faculty, staff, and students. Unless you plan to put all the students in the gym or cafeteria and teach them yourself (and personally communicate with every parent and patron), you need to have a plan for making each person in your school an active member of the school team.

Each member of the school staff is a key communicator with the community—from the custodian to the principal. Even substitute teachers are involved in carrying the image of your school back to the community.

Where do people most often go when they want the "inside story" on an issue or an organization? They seek out someone they know and trust who is directly involved with the source of information in which they are interested. All the favorable newspaper or radio or television coverage in the world will not overturn the negative or inaccurate report given firsthand by one of your employees to a neighbor.

Building good communication with your staff is vitally important. It is your best insurance against negative and divisive talk that originates in-house. Positive attitudes about your school are generated by the ripple effect created by good programs, good people, and good management. Staff members feel these effects first, pass these feelings on to students, who share them with parents, who transmit them to the community at large.

In order for all your school team members to be effective communicators and people who willingly promote an affirmative message about their school, they need to have a clear sense of the school's mission and goals and be fully informed about the school's program and the issues that affect it. This includes all staff, not just teachers. Instructional support staff, bus drivers, crossing guards, food service workers, secretaries, and custodians are all frontline communicators and are just as much a part of the school team as you and the teachers are.

Techniques for Improving Staff Communication

Staff meetings. Here are some suggestions that will assist you in transmitting information at staff meetings, as well as make the experience more pleasant for busy staff.

- Post agendas for your regular staff meetings. When the staff knows the topics in advance, they come better prepared and two-way communication is upgraded.
- Encourage participation and input from everyone.
- Stick to specific topics of interest to all. If you have subjects to discuss that involve only one or two teachers, meet with them privately.
- If it is necessary to review materials, send the information out with the meeting agenda so that pertinent questions can be asked during the meeting, eliminating the need for additional time on the subject later.

- Don't waste staff time by calling a meeting to pass out information that could have been distributed through the mail.
- Whenever possible, chair the meeting yourself—but have others actually present the material or the agenda. This gives you a certain objectivity in observing how the staff relates to an issue. It also involves more participants in the meeting.
- Limit the length of the meeting! By respecting everyone's time, you create an environment that allows you to deal productively with important issues. (Some educational leaders limit staff meetings to an hour—and always serve beverages.)

At North High School (Sheboygan, Wisconsin) most staff meetings are by *affinity groups*, that is, secretaries, custodial staff, teacher's aides, department chairs, and so forth, so that the information shared can be as need-specific as possible. In this way, full-staff meetings can focus on topics of general interest and concern, thus saving time for everybody.

Staff relations team. A good way of communicating in schools with large staffs is to develop a staff relations team made up of teachers from each grade or subject level, several classified employees, and the building administrators. The team meets often (once a week, every other week) to discuss issues concerning the school and the district. Team members represent their colleagues by bringing questions and concerns to the table for discussion. The team members then pass on the discussion results to their colleagues via grade and subject level meetings (see Chapter 3).

Open door policy. Administrators who are available at all times to staff, parents, and students set the tone for a positive, caring attitude throughout the school. An open door sends a powerful message that you are there to help—or just to listen.

Be a good listener. Take time to get to know individual staff members. Ask about their families and their hobbies. Be visible around the campus and pay attention to the feedback you receive from staff. Eat lunch at different times and spend a few minutes visiting with staff members. Chat with them about how the year is going, what their classes are like this year, how they like the new math curriculum, and so on. Their answers will give you an idea of the image they are presenting to parents and community members, and provide you with a valuable tool to target areas needing improved communication.

Address professional needs of staff. Do a minisurvey at a staff meeting to determine what needs the school should address in order to increase staff effectiveness. When planning staff development programs, be attuned to staff suggestions and formulate programs that reflect these recommendations. Encourage teachers and staff to participate in schooling, training, workshops, in-service programs, and other activities that facilitate and improve their effectiveness. Grace King High School (Metairie, Louisiana) brings in outside speakers to talk on topics of current interest during teachers' lunchtime. Off-campus school retreats afford an excellent opportunity in a relaxed setting to share new teaching methods, to discuss the latest in education trends, and to develop a closer relationship among peers.

Staff recognition. Recognition for special efforts can take many different forms. It is important that your staff feel that they are valuable members of the team and that their efforts and input count. The most powerful recognition is daily acknowledgment of each individual's contributions to the success of the school team. This can be as simple as a welcoming greeting in the morning or verbal approval of a job well done. Think about your personal leadership style. Do you offer praise freely, or is it given grudgingly and on an infrequent basis? As an educational leader, whichever style you model will be followed by your staff.

Successful teams do not generally single out individuals for special recognition. By rewarding one individual for being the best at something, you isolate him or her from the team and send the message that the rest of the team is not as important. Focus on recognizing staff through appreciation of efforts that promote teamwork. Following are ideas for staff recognition:

- Write personal notes of appreciation.
- Take time to thank someone in person.
- Create a floating monthly award with an amusing theme.
- Hold drawings for free dinners or movie tickets donated by local businesses.
- Provide a special treat in the lounge such as doughnuts or ice cream sundaes.
- Hold a barbecue at the completion of a successful project or event.
- Give posters with a theme promoting teamwork that can be displayed in work areas and classrooms.
- Sponsor an after-school holiday get-together (and not necessarily on the last afternoon prior to Christmas break).
- Provide special buttons or pins.

- Create a staff committee to organize recognitions. After all, it's a team effort.
- Host an end-of-the-year party; you can enlist others to help you. (But if this is the only full faculty and/or staff social gathering of the year, you've waited about 5 months too long to get everyone together.)

Address personal needs of staff. An awareness and willingness to find out and meet the personal needs of staff members is greatly appreciated. Exhibiting this kind of caring attitude encourages the staff to become involved in supporting each other as well. Here are some suggestions for meeting personal needs:

- Sponsor a wellness clinic through the local hospital.
- Start a Weight Watchers at Work chapter.
- Organize an after-school aerobics class.
- Create a cooperative child-care group for staff taking evening classes.
- Hold a stress workshop.
- Create a social activities club for single staff members.
- Develop a peer support network.
- Start a "sunshine fund" to provide flowers or small gifts for birthdays, weddings, births, funerals, and achievements.
- Arrange for coverage of a teacher's classes in case of emergency.

Staff publications. Use your staff newsletter to communicate information that does not need to be covered in a staff meeting (see Chapter 8). Johnston (Iowa) Senior High has a principal's bulletin that is in the mailbox of each staff member on Monday mornings. Many principals feel the need for a written bulletin (for faculty and students) issued daily—so that no news becomes old news. (A sample staff bulletin/weekly calendar is "FYI: For Your Information," at the end of this chapter. This school bulletin from Dodgeville [Wisconsin] High School is always printed on bright orange paper to draw attention to it and to distinguish it from other printed material.) Encourage teachers to contribute monthly grade-level/department reports for a newsletter to update the rest of the staff on curriculum items and to pass on successful teaching tips.

Faculty/staff handbooks should include information about school and district policies, insurance and disability policies, absences and leaves, school philosophy, curriculum, staff conduct, retirement, grievances and complaints, evaluations, records, professional growth, and salaries. Consider a school supplement to the district's handbook that will cover any relevant local school issues or policies.

Staff business cards. Solicit local business funds to provide all employees at your school—faculty and staff—with their own business cards. This builds a sense of pride, worth, and ownership in your school. It says, "I am important, and I'm proud to let people know where I work."

Staff crisis updates. All staff members should be familiar with your crisis plan (see Chapter 10) and have a clear understanding of their roles. In order for them to function effectively in a crisis, however, they must have current information about the situation. Don't wait for regularly scheduled staff meetings to share crisis updates. If staff members are to effectively communicate the true status of a situation to concerned parents and community members, they must be apprised of current information as soon and as often as feasible. They need to get their information from you directly and not through the grapevine. When people are aware of situations but don't have accurate information, they begin to speculate. Speculation turns into rumor, which turns into misinformation that is damaging to the school and difficult to undo. With proper information, your staff can assist in diffusing the impact of crisis situations on campus.

New staff orientation program. Involve your veteran staff members in creating an orientation program for new staff. You could develop a special kit of "survival" materials to help them become acclimated. Establish a mentor or buddy system that pairs newcomers with veterans on their grade level or in their department. Hold monthly meetings for newcomers and their veteran partners to share their experiences.

Welcome substitutes and volunteers. People who spend time in your school as substitutes, student teachers, or volunteers become a part of your school team also. Get to know them and encourage their participation in school activities. Include them in staff meetings when appropriate. Remember that they, too, are important sources of information to the community about your school.

Assemble welcome packets that include important information about your school: demographics, a map of the campus, a list of staff members, and so forth. Include a name tag that identifies each newcomer as a substitute, volunteer, or student teacher.

Make a sign in the lounge welcoming substitutes. Take a Polaroid picture of each sub and place the photo, name, and the class in which he or she is subbing on the sign. This makes substitutes feel welcome

and serves as an icebreaker with other staff members. Do the same for volunteers and student teachers.

Be a cheerleader. As an educational leader, you set the tone for your school, so don't be afraid to lead the parade. Look for things to celebrate, large and small, and when you can't find any, invent some. Positive attitudes are contagious, so spread yours around!

Techniques for Improving Student Communication

The very best ambassadors for education are students. If students are not excited about learning and proud of their school, then school has failed them by not providing the kind of environment that nurtures success. This environment does not require the newest building or technologically up-to-date equipment. It means that educators must create, within whatever limited resources are available, a warm and caring climate that fosters self-esteem and a desire to learn.

An example of this is poignantly illustrated by an incident related by Karen Kleinz, Director of School/Community Relations for Washington Elementary School District in Phoenix, Arizona:

> During the time I was working at Rancho Viejo School in Yuma, Arizona, it was honored as the "#1, A+" school in the state. Yuma is located near the Mexican border and the school population is over 50% minority, with three fourths of the students participating in a free or reduced lunch program.
>
> My husband, a Federal Narcotics Agent, was involved in the raid of a home in the school's neighborhood. In the house at the time was a Rancho Viejo student. The boy's father, one of the suspects, wasn't home, so the agents waited for him. Amidst all the frightening commotion of having law enforcement agents in the home searching for evidence and waiting to arrest his father, this young boy approached my husband and asked, "Do you know where I go to school?"
>
> My husband answered that he didn't, and asked the obvious question, to which the boy replied, "I go to Rancho Viejo, and we're #1!" The boy then proudly showed off the backpack each student had received with the award and told all the other officers where he went to school.
>
> For that little boy, school was a safe haven, a place where he belonged and of which he was proud. Being a student at the #1 school was one of the most important things in his life at that time.
>
> That incident underscored for me, more than anything else, the critically important role of our schools—and highlighted the reason why Rancho Viejo was such an outstanding school.

Society places an enormous burden on schools. Today educators must be all things to all children—and then some. Amazingly, educators continue to be up to the task, willingly accepting the challenges and overcoming great odds on a daily basis. But as mentioned in Chapter 1, educators are often reluctant to toot their own horns. Students will do it for you if you include them in your communications network.

Be enthusiastic. When you are excited about something, your students will be, too. Let the kid inside you show and children will respond tenfold. For many children, the enthusiasm shown for them and for their school is the only positive reenforcement they receive—and enthusiasm is definitely contagious!

Be visible. Every child on campus should be able to identify you as the principal, no matter how big your school. Join in their activities: jump rope, shoot a few baskets, participate in an art class, eat lunch in the cafeteria; attend athletic events, music concerts, and drama productions. Let them know that you are more than just the person who enforces the rules and metes out the punishment. Demonstrate your interest in students' activities with your presence.

Learn students' names. Work at learning the names of the students who *aren't* in your office all the time for discipline or who *aren't* on the student council or the honor roll.

Use positive body language. Students are very sensitive to your body language and have an innate sense of your response to them. Learn to smile, wink, and nod in nonverbal acknowledgment of a child's presence. Remember that your most difficult student may be from an abusive home and you may be the most caring presence in his or her life.

Student recognition. Create as many ways as possible to reward and recognize students. You and your staff can design awards and certificates that meet specific needs. You are limited only by your imagination in what can be recognized. Let students create peer recognition awards as well. Recognition helps students build pride in themselves, their work, and their school. By praising students for their contributions to the school team and by recognizing individual and group efforts you will build a positive school family that supports learning achievements. (Included at chapter's end are some sample

"Student of the Month" and "In Recognition of Outstanding Scholarship/ Excellent Attendance" certificates. To make these certificates special, have them printed on heavy, high-quality paper.)

Create a student relations team. Create a team of student representatives who meet with you each month to discuss issues and concerns, similar to the staff relations team. Involve them in establishing school rules and planning special events. Encourage them to take ownership of their ideas and decisions.

Student publications. Establish a student newspaper (see Chapter 8). Publish a book of student poetry or creative writing. Encourage students to communicate through both the written and spoken word.

New student orientation. Just as you do with new staff members, involve students in creating an orientation program for new students. Put together a student survival kit and set up a buddy system to make new students feel a part of the school.

References and Suggested Readings

Guttmann, R. C. (1993). Community relations: Guidepoints to improving and keeping them strong. In J. L. & J. J. Herman (Eds.), *People and education: Vol. 1. The human side of school* (pp. 105-120). Newbury Park, CA: Corwin.

Hymes, D. (1993). An almanac of low tech communication ideas. *Journal of Educational Public Relations, 14*(4), 13-30.

National School Public Relations Association. (1986). *School public relations: The complete book*. Arlington, VA: Author.

FYI
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

For Week of . . .
Monday, March 22
to Sunday, March
28, 1993

Birthdays: (3/25) Jack Harrison

After School Detention Supervisor: Anne Massey
B4—3:30-4:15 p.m.

Mon. 3/22/93

Cultural Arts' Visitation day—Johnston Gallery

8th Graders—Registration for elective and required classes

2:30pm—Dr. Appt.—Sub: Candace Pitts

7:00pm—School Board Meeting—B4

7:30pm—Music Concert—Gym197—"XL" (Sponsored by National Honor Society)

Tue. 3/23/93

8:00am—3rd Qtr. Grade Sheets due into Joyce Evans

Bill Wasley—PL—38th Annual Southwestern Wisconsin Librarian's Conference—U.W.—Platteville—All Day—No Sub

Gari Walz—PL—WSST Science Convention—Stevens Point—All Day—Sub: Parmley Harris

9:45am—Fire Drill

Joyce Evans & Kim Schroeder—PL—Stevens Point—SASI User's Meeting—Holidome—Tuesday & Wednesday—No sub for Kim; Janice Fritsch for Joyce

Wed. 3/24/93

8:15am—U.W.—Madison Tuba/Euphonium Ensemble Concert (Music Students only—5th-12th Grade)

Rick Hugill—PL—Tech-Prep Council—SWTC—Periods 1-5—Sub: Parmley Harris

Noon—SWAL Conference District Administrator's Meeting—Iowa—Grant

Noon—SWAL Conference A.D. Meeting—Thyms (Knight Wynn to attend)

12:42-1:00pm—Homerooms

3:30-4:30pm—District Gifted/Talented Advisory Committee—DMS Library

Thurs.	*3/25/93*	*Fred Allness—PL—WCSS Convention—Oconomowoc—All day—Sub: Oral Gilbertson*
Fri.	*3/26/93*	*Ken Clough—PL—State Driver Education Conference—Friday & Saturday—Stevens Point—Sub: Janice Fritsch*
		Barb Thompson—Leave—All Day—Sub: Linda Lawson
		Department budgets due in to the principal by the end of the day
		PM—FBLA Bowling Party—Dodger Bowl
Sat.	*3/27/93*	*8:00am—District Forensics—U.W.—Platteville*
		8:30am-4:00pm—FFA Basketball Tournament—Gym
Sun.	*3/28/93*	*Noon—Wrestling Banquet—Cafeteria*

HERE AND THERE

1. Dodgeville High School's Chapter of National Honor Society will be sponsoring the music group "XL" at Friday's assembly program from 2:35-3:23 p.m. and Monday night's 7:30 p.m. concert in the DHS gym. Admission is $2.50 for students and $3.00 for adults. Besides entertaining music, they have some excellent messages about staying in school and getting the best education that you can.

2. 3rd Quarter Grade Sheets are due in to Joyce Evans by 8:00 a.m. Tuesday, March 23. Report cards will be mailed out by the end of the week. An announcement of the April 12 Parent-Teacher Conferences will be placed in next Thursday's edition of the Dodgeville Chronicle. Parents will be encouraged to schedule conference times with teachers between March 25-April 2 and again on April 12.

3. Don't forget—departmental budgets are due in to Mr. Athey by 3:30 p.m. Friday, March 26.

4. Any faculty or staff member who would like to submit an article for the March newsletter is encouraged to get it turned in to the principal by March 19.

5. Good-luck to our Dodgers in many co- and extra-curricular activities this week—Boy's Basketball Team, Math Team, DECA members, and Forensics students. Do your best!

SOURCE: Dodgeville (Wisconsin) High School.

Student
of the Month

THIS CERTIFIES THAT

_____

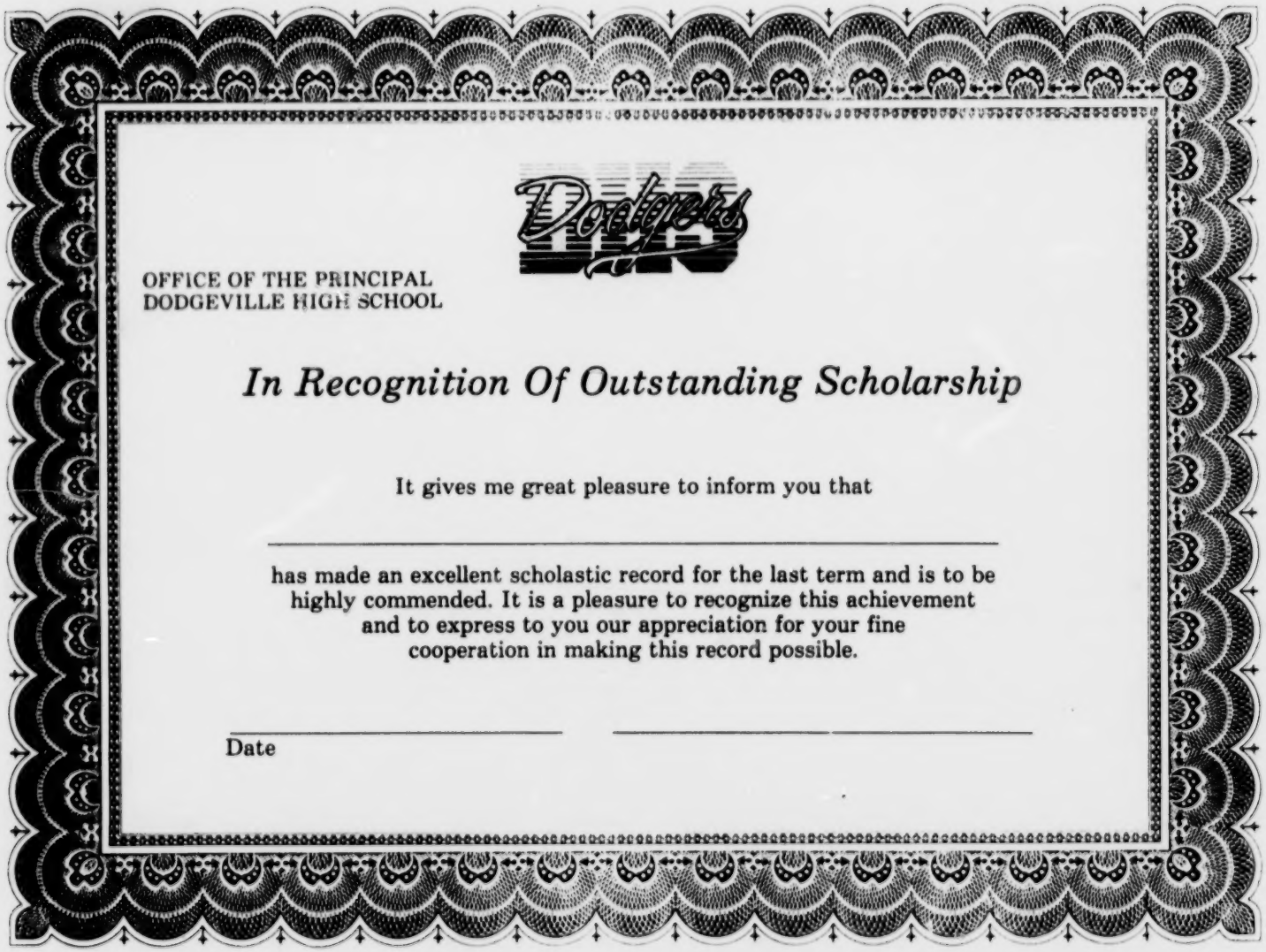
_____
SCHOOL

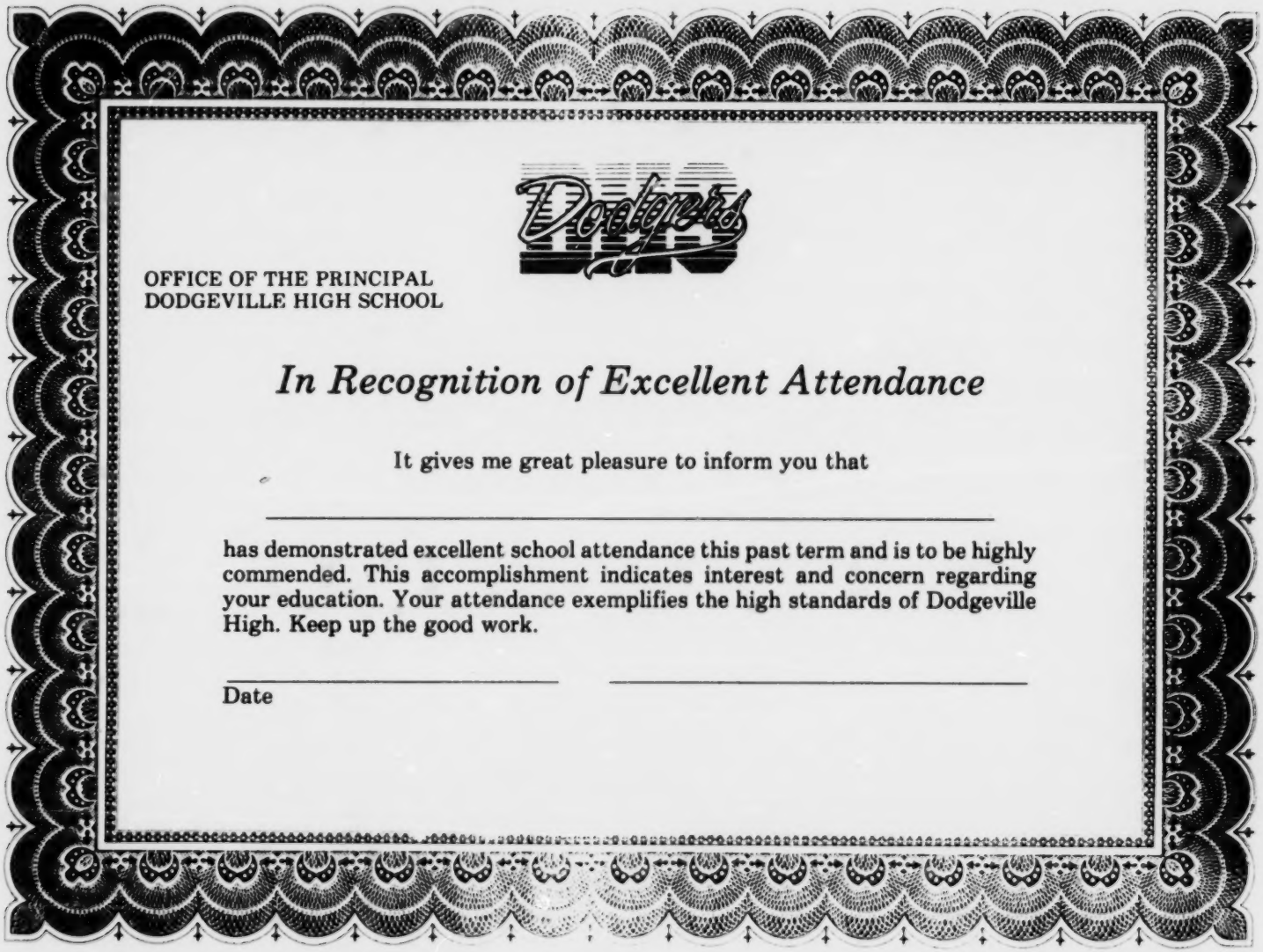
_____ _____
CITY STATE

has been recognized for outstanding achievement and is hereby awarded this certificate of distinction.

Given this _____ day of _____ 19___

_____ _____


Dodgers
OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL
DODGEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL
In Recognition Of Outstanding Scholarship
It gives me great pleasure to inform you that
has made an excellent scholastic record for the last term and is to be highly commended. It is a pleasure to recognize this achievement and to express to you our appreciation for your fine cooperation in making this record possible.
Date



OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL
DODGEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

In Recognition of Excellent Attendance

It gives me great pleasure to inform you that

_____

has demonstrated excellent school attendance this past term and is to be highly commended. This accomplishment indicates interest and concern regarding your education. Your attendance exemplifies the high standards of Dodgeville High. Keep up the good work.

_____ _____

Date

6

INVOLVING PARENTS IN SCHOOL

"Not every teacher is a parent, but every parent is a teacher."

One of the most important things a parent can teach a child is the importance of education. As example is the best teacher, when parents exhibit interest in their child's school, the child gets a sense that school is important.

Schools clearly work best when parents take an active interest in their children's schooling and encourage their children to do well. Research has demonstrated over and over that parent involvement is a critical component of the learning process. The evidence has shown that programs designed for strong parent involvement and schools that

relate well to their communities have students that outperform other schools. Children whose parents help them at home score higher on aptitude tests than those whose parents are not involved. Schools in which children are failing have been found to improve dramatically when parents are asked to help.

In *The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement* Ann Henderson (1987) summed up the research as follows:

- The family provides the primary educational environment.
- Involving parents in their children's education improves student achievement.
- Parent involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, long lasting, and well planned.
- The benefits are not confined to early childhood or the elementary level; there are strong effects from involving parents continuously throughout high school.
- Involving parents in their own children's education at home is not enough. To ensure the quality of schools as institutions serving the community, parents must be involved at all levels in the school.
- Children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve parents. Parents do not have to be well educated to help.
- You cannot look at the school and home in isolation from one another; you must see how they interconnect with each other.

Effective Educators Seek Parent Support

Because parent involvement starts at the building level, it is up to the educational leader to help bridge the home-school gap and make involvement a reality in every community. In a study of six New Jersey counties, education researcher Benjamin Bloom (1976) identified five factors that were found in successful parent involvement programs:

1. Climate. Successful programs exuded a warm, caring environment and made parents feel like important members of the school team.
2. Relevance. The programs were based on what parents cared about. Concerns were identified by surveying parents.
3. Convenience. Successful programs made it easy for parents to get involved. They provided transportation, child care, and so forth, to encourage participation.
4. Publicity. The programs used several mediums to reach parents, such as newsletters, flyers, public service announcements, and local media. Parents were personally invited to participate. Schools with large non-

English-speaking populations communicated in whatever languages were required to reach parents.

5. Commitment. The staff made parent involvement a goal and demonstrated their commitment.

In their book *Parents On Your Side*, Lee and Marlene Canter (1991) describe the four qualities shared by teachers who have been successful in involving parents in the educational process.

1. Effective teachers know they must have the support of parents.
2. In every interaction with parents, effective teachers demonstrate their concern for the child.
3. In all situations, effective teachers treat parents the way they want to be treated.
4. In every interaction with parents, effective teachers demonstrate professionalism and confidence.

The same qualities obviously apply to principals and staff. Educators, as a team, must work together with parents to build support for the school's program and activities. Educators need to provide multiple ways for parents to participate so that they can begin at their own individual comfort level. Educators must help parents improve their skills so that they can better respond to the school's request for assistance. Magic City Campus (Minot, North Dakota) developed a plan and schedule for its Parent/School Partnerships (itinerary included at the end of this chapter).

Ways to Involve Parents

Volunteer programs. Many parents want to be involved in their child's school on a more active level than just encouraging excellence or helping with homework. There must be activities available in which they can participate. You must see that these opportunities exist, and you must be open to projects that parents initiate. Whether it is participating in PTA, raising money for the school band, helping in the library, tutoring, or assisting the school nurse with eye tests, parents can be a tremendous asset to schools that have neither the personnel, resources, nor time to organize and carry out the "extras" that add to a school's effectiveness. If you have someone on staff who can encourage and coordinate volunteer activities, that's great; if not, perhaps a trusted, energetic volunteer will take on the job (with your counsel, of course).

At South Park Middle School (Corpus Christi, Texas) parents are heading up the production of the school's first-ever yearbook. When parents (especially fathers) act as chaperones at school dances or as monitors at athletic events, there is less rowdiness and fewer discipline problems. But in order for busy parents to volunteer, they have to feel needed and wanted. So it is up to you (or your volunteer coordinator) to get the word out that your school welcomes volunteers. See the sample Parent Involvement Survey from L'Anse Creuse Middle School North (Macomb Township, Michigan) at the end of this chapter.

Student recognition. Parents feel honored when their children are honored. It is no secret that the best attended events on campus are events at which children perform. Create as many ways as possible to reward and recognize students. You and your staff can design awards that meet specific needs. You are limited only by your imagination in what can be recognized. Let students create peer recognition awards as well. Recognition helps students build pride in themselves, their work, and their school. By praising students for their contributions to the school team and recognizing group efforts, you will build a positive school family that supports learning achievements.

Plymouth (Minnesota) Middle School hosts a breakfast for students with a high academic average and their parents. It is one of their most popular events and fills the cafeteria.

Parent workshops. Offer a daylong workshop for parents that provides a variety of sessions focusing on parenting skills. Use the expertise of your own staff, as well as inviting speakers from the community social service agencies. Sessions can cover a broad spectrum of topics from discipline to stress reduction. To better facilitate planning, consider surveying parents in advance to determine their interests. (Mesa Public Schools, Mesa, Arizona.)

Grade level curriculum handbook. Create a handbook for parents that explains the curriculum and skills that students are expected to learn at each grade level. If possible, include a calendar of studies so parents know at what time during the year their children will be studying certain topics. Provide a list of supplemental activities that parents can do with their children to reinforce skills. (Orangewood Elementary School, Phoenix, Arizona.)

Home visits. Encourage teachers to make home visits prior to the first day of school. Personal contact maintained year-round facilitates

parent involvement by building a personal relationship and providing a sense that they are part of the school family.

School visits/calls. Is your school open to visitors? Are your teachers open to inquiry from parents? You must develop a process that parents will feel comfortable using, a process that announces that your school is willing, even enthusiastic, about receiving communication from parents—and this includes visits. Of course, there will be times when a visit is inconvenient and a parent can't sit down with a child's teacher, or with you. But if a response to a parent's overtures is always positive, parents will not feel rebuffed, and will sense that the school is as interested in their children's welfare and progress as they are.

Open house. Open house a few weeks after school begins is the traditional way. You might experiment with having a schoolwide open house during the first week of school. Parents are eager to meet teachers and to experience their children's school environment. There may not be a lot of the children's work to display, but there aren't many complaints to hear, either.

Sharon Lewis, fifth grade teacher at Simpson Elementary School (Phoenix, Arizona), holds her open house the week before school starts, from 4:00 to 6:00 one afternoon. She mails invitations and then follows up with a phone call. That extra phone call is what really brings in the majority of the parents. She invites the principal and any special teachers who will be involved with her students. Over the years she has discovered that the attendance is much better than for the schoolwide open house held later in the fall.

Take-home resource materials. Have supplementary study materials and videotapes available for parents to check out and use with their children at home. Include study guides to assist the parent. Some districts now have programs that allow parents to check out computers.

Parent room on campus. If you have an extra room in your building, create a place where parents can review resource materials, watch educational videos, and network with each other.

Meetings in parents' homes. Don't always ask parents to come to the school to meet with you. Invite parents to host small group meetings on single topics in their homes. Changing the territory can often facilitate more open communication.

ESL for parents. Offer English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classes in the evening for parents. Provide child care.

Friday folder. Send all papers home in a special folder once a week. Include a sign-off sheet for parents to verify that they received the information.

Notes and cards mailed home. New Castle (Indiana) Middle School sends congratulatory notes to honor students and Students of the Week for perfect attendance or for special accomplishments. Cards are given out for birthdays and are mailed home when a death in the family occurs.

Coffee with the principal. Hold a regular coffee klatch and invite parents to drop by and chat. Consider finding a neutral site off campus, such as a nearby fast-food restaurant or a favorite community meeting place.

Doughnuts for dads. Hold an early morning doughnuts and coffee get-together to catch dads on their way to work. Create a Fathers Club to take on special projects. (Of course, these programs would work equally well for working moms.)

Church support. Work with local clergy to set up alternate ways to reach the community regarding the importance of family involvement in schools. Some churches allow their parishioners to set up tables for petition signing or for bond election handouts. This is usually done just outside the church entrance or during coffee time after services.

Parent committees. Offer parents the opportunity to serve on curriculum committees or ad hoc project committees.

Career day. Hold a career day and invite parents in to talk about their jobs—or do the reverse and have students shadow parents at work.

College preview night. Invite parents to hear from representatives of local colleges and universities. Provide scholarship information.

Parent talent show. For a change, invite parents to showcase their talents and perform for the students. Or your school might prefer a parent/faculty/staff talent show. Students could be judges.

Athletic competitions. Seek parent volunteers to participate in a basketball or volleyball game (or league) between parents and teachers or parents and students. Open Gym one or two nights a week reserved for students, parents, and staff fosters camaraderie among that group.

Social services referral. Be prepared to assist parents who need support from social agencies by providing them with referral information.

Family fun night. Host an evening for families to play games or watch a movie together.

Parent buddies. Involve the PTA or other parent volunteers in being buddies to new parents. Parents are more likely to get involved if they are made to feel welcome immediately and helped to get oriented.

Monthly parent activity. Offer a regular activity focused on ways parents can assist their child in school. One session might focus on homework, one on self-esteem, and so forth. This is a wonderful way for parents to emphasize group awareness of a problem and to work together and support each other in developing parenting skills.

Changing Demographics of the American Family

In order to excel, children need support and reinforcement at home—the place where they spend the bulk of their time. Researcher Benjamin Bloom has observed: "The home environment is a most powerful factor in determining the level of school achievement, student interest in school learning, and the number of years of schooling a student will receive."

But in too many instances, the home environment is the least supportive of students or the least encouraging of learning. Today it seems that society has determined that it is up to educators to take the lead in creating a nurturing, supportive, responsible learning environment for students.

Principals and teachers must not only educate and inform parents about the importance of their role, they must also provide training and resources so that parents can be successful in that role. You and your staff have become responsible to motivate parents to motivate their children.

One of the greatest challenges facing education today arises from the demographic changes that encompass culture, race, age, and socioeconomic status—in short, just about every aspect of American society.

A very real gap exists between schools and those they serve, and that gap is slowly widening to become education's version of the Grand Canyon. If schools are to bridge that gap, school leaders must design new and effective ways to communicate with the changing population that schools serve. Some facts about today's families include:

- In 1955, 60% of households consisted of a working father, a homemaker mother, and two or more school-age children. That family now represents less than 10% of the households.
- About one in four school children now lives in a one-parent family.
- Children in single-parent homes are about five times more likely to live in poverty than children with both parents at home.
- Experts forecast that over half the poor in the year 2000 will be women and children.

A study conducted by the Knowledge Network for All Americans (Lloyd, Ramsey, & Groennings, 1992) found that most families are inadequately preparing children for the demands of today's world. Following are some of the survey's findings:

- Many children in America are not born healthy, do not receive adequate nutrition, do not live in safe homes and neighborhoods, and do not get preventive health care, thereby experiencing impaired educational development.
- Many parents are not providing their children with character education that encourages responsible, constructive behavior.
- Far too many children enter school unprepared to learn and leave high school without the basic knowledge and skills to get decent jobs or to enter college.
- Most self-reliant, academically achieving, well-rounded, and healthy children have parents who have created a stable, supportive family.

These findings concerning American families come as no surprise to any experienced or observant educational leader. But along with changing family structure, schools must also be prepared to deal with racial and cultural differences that may lead to negative interaction and conflict if not handled appropriately. Not only are today's families structured differently, they look and think differently as well.

- Fifteen percent of students entering public school today speak a language other than English, and this figure is expected to increase.
- By the year 2000, more than half of all students in public and private schools in 53 of the largest U.S. cities will be from ethnic minority groups. Already in many schools the minority is the majority.

- The 1990 census showed that the African-American population in the United States increased by 13%, the Hispanic population by 53%, and the Asian population by 108%. In contrast, the Caucasian population increased by only 6%.

Hard-to-Reach Parents

A study conducted by Don Davies (1988) of the Institute for Responsive Education examined the relationships between hard-to-reach parents and the school. The conclusion was that most of the parents in the study were, in fact, reachable, but that schools were either not really trying to involve them or not knowledgeable about or sensitive enough to overcome cultural and social-class barriers. The six primary barriers that limited school involvement for the hard-to-reach parents were identified as:

1. Children from families not conforming to middle-class norms are often seen by school officials as being children who will have trouble in school.
2. Communication between schools and poor families is mostly negative. Most of these parents are contacted only when their children are in trouble.
3. Teachers and administrators appear to think of these families as being deficient (as families) and concentrate on the problems rather than on the strengths of these families.
4. School staff tends to believe that the problems of parents who are hard to reach are the fault of parents, not the schools.
5. Many poverty-level families have a low assessment of themselves in their abilities to be involved in their children's schooling.
6. Most parents from all groups studied expressed a strong desire to be involved in their children's schooling.

Educators must be especially careful not to further alienate parents by labeling them as hard to reach. Instead, take a look at your own attitudes and the methods you and your staff are using to communicate. Educators must assure all parents that they have a part to play in their child's education.

An important area to consider in trying to involve parents is communicating in the appropriate language. You need to make an extra effort to include non-English-speaking parents in your programs, as the language barrier may be all that is keeping them from participating. These parents are often some of the most supportive toward schools and, once welcomed, will give unselfishly of their time.

From The Parent Institute (1992) come 10 ideas for involving hard-to-reach parents:

1. Commitment. The school must want to involve parents and be willing to work hard to get them involved. You must personally reflect this commitment.
2. Strong personal outreach. If parents have had a negative experience in their own schooling, they may hesitate to get involved. Personal contact by someone at your school can often bridge the gap.
3. Nonjudgmental attitude. Research shows that low-income parents (like most parents) want to help their children and will implement suggestions offered by teachers—if they really understand what is being asked. When teachers reach out, these parents will help.
4. Creativity. Traditional methods of parent involvement often do not work. Creative approaches are more likely to work, such as an ice cream social on a Sunday afternoon.
5. Informal workshops that solve parents' problem. Formal meetings are often unsuccessful with hard-to-reach parents. They may prefer interacting with their children at "make and take" workshops or working on community projects. Helpful social, economic, or medical advice could also be provided in conjunction with the event.
6. Flexibility. Holding meetings at times and places convenient to parents—not educators—is essential.
7. Child care. The number one reason mothers do not attend evening meetings is that they have no one to care for their other children.
8. Support from the top. Make sure you stand at the door to greet every parent who attends.
9. Parent volunteers. Other parents will always have more credibility than anyone from the school. Encourage parents to ask friends and neighbors to take part in school activities.
10. Follow-up. Telephone parents the day after a meeting to thank them for attending. If they don't have a telephone, write a note. Be sure to follow up with some form of thank-you to every parent who helps.

At chapter's end is "A Dodger Salute" to parents. This salute is designed to be printed on both sides of heavy, 8 × 8 inch paper. When folded in half, it becomes a self-mailer. Of course, don't limit your salutes and notes of appreciation to hard-to-reach parents. Include all parents and community members who are deserving of recognition.

Parents Needed for Political Support

To further persuade you that parents are essential to the well-being of your school, just remind yourself of the statistic cited in the preface:

Only one fourth of American households has a school-age child in it. This means that the households who consider themselves to have a strong stake in the quality of your school are vastly outnumbered by those who may not care one way or another. Worse, these childless households may consider tax-supported expenditures for schools for other people's children to be a waste of money.

When it comes time to seek out community support for a bond or budget election, to whom do you turn for political support (i.e., for votes)? Parents who identify with their child's school are much more likely to turn out to vote for school issues—and to vote affirmatively. They are also a potential advocacy group for encouraging others to vote for educational needs. To the extent that schools need political support to thrive and survive, parents are more important than ever before—and in that same sense, the fewer they are, the more important they are.

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MAGIC CITY CAMPUS
PARENT/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS
1992-93

1. Develop a quarterly newsletter.
2. Continue the school's emphasis on using community resource people (businessmen/women and parents) in the classrooms as speakers and panel members.
3. Establish a program to use interested parents as tutors or aides in the classrooms.
4. Provide information to parents at the beginning of the school year concerning clubs, organizations, athletics, and other school activities.
5. Develop a parent needs assessment survey to be sent out at the beginning of the school year.
6. Develop a 7:00 p.m. monthly parent activity at school:

A. Sept. 1	Overview of classes where the parents attend their child's 7 period classes. Teachers are responsible for conducting 10-minute classes in which the course outcomes and educational activities involved in the course are shared.
B. Sept. 29	A career fair prior to the next day's student career fair.
C. Nov. 12	Meet with teachers individually concerning the child's 1st quarter grades.
D. Dec. 8	Parenting seminars developed by the Psychology classes, Parenting classes, and the counseling staff.
E. Jan. 25	Overview of classes where the parents attend their child's 7 period classes. Teachers are responsible for conducting 10-minute classes in which the course outcomes and educational activities involved in the course are shared.
F. Feb. 2	Parent tours of academic departments prior to their children registering for the next year's classes.
G. Mar. 30	Parenting seminars developed by the Psychology classes, Parenting classes, and the counseling staff.

SOURCE: Magic City Campus High School, Minot, North Dakota.

L'ANSE CREUSE MIDDLE SCHOOL NORTH
PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY
1992-93

Parent Name: _____

Address: _____

Zip Code: _____

Phone: Home _____ Work _____

Student(s) Name and Grade Level(s)

_____	_____	_____	_____
Name	Grade	Name	Grade

I am willing to volunteer for the activities

I have checked on this survey.

Signed _____

Signed _____

1. Parent Advisory Council Workers

   A. Hospitality

	____ PAC Meeting	September 9th	7:00 p.m.
	____ PAC Meeting	October 7th	7:00 p.m.
	____ PAC Meeting	November 4th	7:00 p.m.
	____ PAC Meeting	February 3rd	7:00 p.m.
	____ PAC Meeting	March 31st	7:00 p.m.
	____ District Area Council	October 14th	7:30 p.m.
	____ District Population Committee (Date to be announced)		
	____ Open House	October 13th	6:00 p.m.
	____ Honors Assembly	June 3rd	5:30 p.m.
B.	____ Parent Volunteer Luncheon	May 11th	Noon

2. ____ Bake Sale(s)

3. ____ Teacher Helpers; running dittos, preparing teaching materials, etc. (To be arranged with individual teacher(s))

4. ____ Intramural Basketball on Saturdays (6th grade begins 11/21, 7th and 8th grade begins 12/5)

5. ____ Drama Helpers—2:45-4:45 p.m. (Dates to be announced—will also include some Saturdays)

6.	Band Concerts		
	____ Christmas Concert #1	Dec. 9th	7:00 p.m.
	____ Christmas Concert #2	Dec. 16th	7:00 p.m.
	____ Mid-Winter/ Pre-Festival Concert	Feb. 25th	7:00 p.m.
	____ Spring Concert #1	May 20th	7:00 p.m.
	____ Spring Concert #2	May 26th	7:00 p.m.
	____ Capital Performance—Lansing (Tentative)		
7.	____ Honor Society Induction Banquet	May 4th	5:30 p.m.
8.	Chaperone Volunteers		
	____ Student Council Training ISD	Oct. 16th	8:30 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.
	____ Halloween Costume Judges	Oct. 30th	11:00 a.m.- 1:15 p.m.
	____ Earned After School Incentive Event/Treat	Nov. 20th	2:30 p.m.- 5:30 p.m.
	____ After School Party	Dec. 4th	2:45 p.m.- 4:30 p.m.
	____ 8th Grade Breakfast Helpers	Feb. 9th	8:00 a.m.- 9:30 a.m.
	____ 7th Grade Breakfast Helpers	Feb. 10th	8:00 a.m.- 9:30 a.m.
	____ 6th Grade Breakfast Helpers	Feb. 11th	8:00 a.m.- 9:30 a.m.
	____ Earned After School Incentive Event/Treat	Feb. 19th	2:30 p.m.- 5:30 p.m.
	____ After School Party	Mar. 5th	2:45 p.m.- 4:30 p.m.
	____ Earned After School Incentive Event/Treat	May 14th	2:30-p.m. 5:30 p.m.
	____ 8th Grade Bob-Lo Trip	June 7th	8:30 a.m.- 8:15 p.m.
	____ End of Year After School Party	June 11th	2:45 p.m.- 4:30 p.m.
	____ Metro Beach	June 15th	8:30 a.m.- 2:45 p.m.

SOURCE: L'Anse Creuse Middle School North, Macomb Township, Michigan.

A DODGER SALUTE

(Front Flap)

DODGEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL
Dodgers
OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

You Are Part of the Good Things Happening At

DODGEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

A Dodger Salute to _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(Inside Flap)

Dodgeville High School
912 West Chapel Street
Dodgeville, WI 53533

To: Name and Address

(Back Flap)

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

"It takes an entire village to educate a single child."

African proverb

The American school system is the institution responsible for teaching children the history and ideals of the culture and the language and thinking skills that will allow them to become productive members of society. In earlier days, children were expected to learn hands-on applications under the guidance and tutelage of family members and friends, or they were apprenticed to local craftsmen. Moral instruction was provided by home and church. The entire community assumed a share of responsibility for educating its children.

Townsfolk joined together to build and care for the school building, search for a teacher, and protect the school environment from harm. The teacher was held in high esteem within the community and was often provided housing as well as a salary.

Communities are still responsible through their tax dollars for building and maintaining public schools and paying the salaries of educators who teach and care for children. But, unfortunately, many of today's taxpayers believe their responsibility to the school ends there (if it even extends that far) and are loath to contribute additional resources once their own children are grown. Teachers are expected to be skilled professionals who continually work on their professional growth, yet are often paid less than hourly laborers who dropped out of high school.

Still, it is essential for educators to remember that the financial support for public schools is community based—that is, the voters or their elected representatives determine the future tax dollars that provide the resources for schools. If the community believes that its schools—and the professionals who work there—are dedicated to their task, then the community will support school efforts and will contribute the resources necessary to get the job done. If the community believes otherwise (and it is belief or perception on which most people react, not facts), then it will withhold critical financial support. There is little in the way of alternative means of support when the community loses faith in its schools. But when a community believes in its schools, almost nothing is impossible for you and your team.

In recent decades, the nation has shifted away from the concept of the local school being the focal point of a community of responsibility to the concept that (a) schools are just another consumer service and/or (b) schools are essentially charged with relieving the community (and in many instances, parents) of the collective burdens that once were shared by all. No longer perceived as a responsibility shared by the community, the well-being of children has become almost solely the province of parents and schools.

With the growth of the concept of site-based management and other forms of decentralized decision making, education may now be in the early stages of coming full circle. To meet the needs of students in the 21st century it is imperative that schools take the lead in reinitiating community involvement and support. Thus educational leaders must encourage all members of the community—parents, nonparents, the elderly; business, civic, and religious groups—to once again make educating children a priority. Schools must form alliances and coalitions to provide the social services needed by children (and sometimes

by their families as well) and must work collectively with the community as a whole for economic progress through better education.

If there is to be true educational reform, not only must schools be willing to change, the community must be committed to providing the resources and support to sustain the change process and usher in a new era of improved education. As an educational leader, you must inspire your community to renew guardianship of its schools—and its children—in order to guarantee the nation's future.

Getting the Community Involved

Communicating with your constituencies is important, but communicating is merely the first step in getting people involved. There are infinite numbers of ways to interest your community in its school. The only limitation is your imagination and resourcefulness. It is vital that educators be open to all options. Don't focus just on fiscal resources, but seek out in-kind services and mutually beneficial personnel resources. Create programs that give the community a vested interest in education—and in the local school.

Most adults like to be around happy, energetic, positive youngsters, so encourage student programs that interact with the community as much as possible. The Ninilchik, Alaska, schools post notices of all school events in local businesses, sending a solid "everybody is welcome" message.

Tutoring. Research has proven that one-on-one tutoring has a major impact on at-risk students. Most people who volunteer in schools do so because they have a desire to positively influence a child's life. Tutoring programs that are structured so that the tutors are able to build a relationship with a student, to serve as a role model, and to observe a child's progress on a regular basis are the most successful at recruiting and retaining volunteers. Elderly and retired persons constitute a superb talent bank. Additionally, companies that might not financially support a special project may be more than willing to offer employees release time each week for tutoring students. Everyone wins in this kind of program because of the valuable service provided and the good will generated.

Mentoring. After-school programs often provide excellent mentoring opportunities. City agencies, such as police and fire departments,

often encourage their officers to get involved in school and community programs, and these officers make outstanding role models for students. A nearby military base is another excellent source of mentors. These groups are sometimes overlooked when recruiting because it is assumed that they are too busy, yet they often have flexible schedules that allow time for working with students. Mentors can participate in athletic activities, provide homework assistance, as well as just be there to listen, to be a friend, and to take an interest in individual students.

School/business partnerships. Now one of the most prevalent forms of community involvement, school/business partnerships are an important part of many school programs. These can take several different forms, but basically, an individual school is matched with a business or civic organization. Successful partnerships have specific goals and objectives and both parties have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The key is that the partnerships are cooperative and provide positive experiences for both parties.

Like every other interest group, business leaders have to believe they are going to benefit from their efforts. They have to understand that schools are serious about delivering on their promises. They have to know that if they are solicited for support, they will be able to have a say in how that support is directed. If educational leaders are creative in their approach and honest in their purpose, the private sector is poised to be the greatest supporter in America of a reformed and improved school system. A sample of the Minot (North Dakota) School District's resolution advocating Education/Business Partnerships is included at chapter's end.

For schools with vocational/technical programs, school/business partnerships are a natural. Don Bosco Technical High School (Boston, Massachusetts) has long had a number of successful intern and apprentice programs in place. The experiences of Golightly Vocational/Technical Center (Detroit, Michigan) indicate that programs involving business and community leaders as advisers, consultants, and mentors for programs and students are the most effective in developing and maintaining partnerships.

Mountain View Elementary School (Phoenix, Arizona) has a partnership with a branch of First Interstate Bank whereby the bank provides a computer and assists the school in setting up a simulated bank where students apply their math skills.

John Jacobs Elementary School (Phoenix, Arizona) has a partnership with a nearby resort hotel. Several mornings each week, the ESL

teacher and her aide go to the hotel before work to teach a class for the non-English-speaking housekeeping staff. The principal gives leadership and team-building workshops for the hotel's management. In return, the hotel provides meeting rooms for school in-service meetings, student self-esteem training, special events, and gives free dinner certificates for staff recognition drawings.

Cooperative school/business programs might offer internships, shadowing, guest speakers, and hands-on experiences. South Park Middle School (Corpus Christi, Texas) has had a great deal of success with their "Adopt-a-School" program.

Coalitions. If schools are to better serve student needs, they must look at building coalitions with various community groups. Coalitions can identify and target community objectives and assist in finding appropriate support for school projects. These can include both curriculum and facilities needs. Creative educators need to work with community leaders to determine ways in which the mission, activities, resources, and employees/members of various organizations can assist in supporting the schools.

A Wellness Fair is an example of such a coalition. Work with local health care professionals and hospitals to host a Wellness Fair on campus. If you hold it on a school day, it will give you an opportunity to provide school tours for community members when they have finished their wellness evaluation.

Join with local emergency and public service agencies to sponsor a community Safe Kid Day. Have safety vehicles and equipment on display, give CPR lessons, hold a bicycle rodeo, give search and rescue demonstrations, show safety videos. If there is a local canine unit at a state or federal agency, demonstrations by narcotics "sniffer" dogs are always popular. Recruit a local business or the PTA to donate a bike and other gifts for a giveaway drawing as an incentive for attendance.

Cooperative events. Holding joint events in conjunction with another organization can bring the entire community together in positive interaction. Sunnyslope Elementary School and the Phoenix Symphony held a special outdoor spring concert for the local community. Members of the student strings group performed with the symphony in a program that was memorable for all involved. Consider other fine arts groups that might be willing to collaborate with your students, such as dancers, artists, poets, vocal performers, and puppeteers. The Northern Lights, a vocal group from the Music Department at North High

School (Sheboygan, Wisconsin), presents 30 to 40 concerts a year for community organizations.

Additionally, North High athletes serve as outstanding school ambassadors by speaking to students in lower grades about study habits, drug use, and alcohol consumption. These young men and women seem to get this type of message across better than adults can.

Benefits. Reverse the usual trend and have your school hold a special carnival or fair or "whatever-a-thon" to raise money for a local charity rather than for a school project. Sponsor a "Clean Up the Community" day for students, staff, and parents to pick up trash and to repair and spruce up joint use areas.

Publications. Bonanza High School (Las Vegas, Nevada) puts all of its school publications—community and athletic newsletters, announcement bulletins, brag sheets, special announcement flyers, various pamphlets and handouts—in the lobby so that any person who walks through the door, day or night, can pick them up. Kent County High School (Worton, Maryland) puts the school newspaper and yearbook in local doctor and dentist offices. Belleville West High School (Belleville, Illinois) has produced a school video that communicates a positive image of excellence to anyone who wishes to view it.

Speakers bureau. Tap into the knowledge, experience, talents, abilities, and skills of staff members who would be willing to speak to groups and organizations on subjects of community interest in which the staff member is "expert." (For a sample list, see Messick Elementary/ High School Speaker Topics at the end of this chapter.)

Don't forget to include yourself in this speakers bureau, but only if you feel comfortable in front of an audience. Most educational leaders have a great deal of platform experience, but if you don't, consider joining Toastmasters or another similar speech improvement organization that will give you the experience and know-how you need. In fact, you might want to survey your staff to determine if they are interested in starting such a group on campus.

Principal Richard Olthoff has compiled a summary of the Major Magic City Campus Teaching-Learning Programs that his school has developed and implemented over the years. (It is included at chapter's end.) When preparing a speech, it is a handy reference guide. When answering questions from the audience, he is able to recall programs that might otherwise be forgotten at that moment. A word to the wise: "The best impromptu speeches are those written well in advance."

Foundations. A school foundation generally raises funds to provide scholarships, grants, and incentive awards for students and staff. Alumni are excellent resource people to involve in establishing a foundation to benefit your school. These are most often found at the district level, but there is no inherent reason a foundation could not exist at the building level.

Holiday activities. Schools can play an active role in the community during the holidays by holding food and clothing drives, offering the talents of art classes in decorating businesses and storefronts, and supplying musical groups for business or organization functions.

School facilities. Make your building available for civic theater, basketball leagues, community group meetings, dance recitals, arts fairs, adult night classes, and so on.

Personal contacts. Network! Get actively involved in leadership positions in the community, join a local service club, serve on the boards of local charities or youth organizations, have breakfast with members of the Chamber of Commerce, keep local legislators informed of your needs. Encourage, by word and example, your staff members to do the same. Don't neglect to continue to cultivate these resources after the initial contact is made.

References and Suggested Readings

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RESOLUTION
Education/Business Partnerships

WHEREAS partnerships are an opportunity for education and business to band together and make an important investment in the future of our city, state, and nation, and

WHEREAS education/business partnerships foster working together to integrate technology, new directions of teaching and learning, and structural changes that can bridge educational experiences with work experiences, and

WHEREAS experience confirms that both education and business come out as winners when they collaboratively share their unique skills, competencies, and diverse perspectives to meet common needs, and

WHEREAS education/business partnerships foster the belief that our students' ability to compete in the global information economy is inextricably linked to our success in providing appropriate teaching/learning opportunities, and

WHEREAS education/business partnerships are a key to reaching the shared goals of finding new ways to prepare a workforce for the 21st century, and

WHEREAS education/business partnerships address the educational reform theme of encouraging life-long learning skills (inquiry, analysis, problem solving, collaborative learning, and decision making), and

WHEREAS education/business partnerships are one of the major themes in both state and national educational reform models,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Minot Public School District Board of Education endorses the following two points: (1) the development of partnership agreements between businesses in Minot and the Minot Public School District; and (2) business use of school district facilities, equipment, and people as an inducement for entering the partnership agreement.

SOURCE: Richard Olthoff, Principal, Magic City Campus High School, Minot, North Dakota (Minot Public School District Board of Education, Minot, North Dakota).

Messick Elementary/High School
Speaker Topics

Topics	Speakers
Planning the Curriculum: How Parents and Teachers Decide What Students Should Learn	Ron Harold
Textbooks and Beyond: Selecting the Best Learning Materials	James Mason
The Student Testing Program: How We Measure What Students Learn	Caron Lieber
It's a Team Effort: How Parents and Family Can Help Students Succeed in School	Socorro Cruz
School Improvement and Restructuring: How Our Schools Are Preparing for the 21st Century	Chris John
Arts, Music, and Education: Using the Total Curriculum to Teach the 3 R's	Steven Van
High Tech–High Teach: How Your School Is Using Computers and Technology in the Classroom	Cathy Weatherford
Ready to Learn, Ready to Earn: Preparing Students for the Job Market	Jerry Emmett
Learning and Sports: How Our Schools Strike a Balance–and Why	Bobby Jim Foster
Our Schools and Our Communities: Partnerships for Our Children	Connie Pepple
Are We Doing the Best We Can? What Your Schools Need to Help Our Students Succeed	Cristi Warner

SOURCE: Magic City Campus High School, Minot, North Dakota.

Major Magic City Campus Teaching-Learning Programs 1979-93

Program Year	Initiated	Purpose
Implemented a research-based program entitled "Enhancing Student Communication Skills Across the Curriculum."	1979-80	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented a research-based program entitled "Enhancing Student Writing Skills Across the Curriculum."	1980-81	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented a research-based program entitled "Enhancing Student Reading Skills Across the Curriculum."	1981-82	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented a research-based program entitled "Enhancing Student Speaking Skills Across the Curriculum."	1982-83	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented a research-based program entitled "Enhancing Student Listening Skills Across the Curriculum."	1983-84	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Proposed and implemented the school board approved policy increasing the minimum student load from four to five academic courses and increasing the minimum graduation credits from 19 to 20.	1984-85	Student Learning
Implemented a research-based program entitled "Questions—Discussion Teaching Skills."	1985-86	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented a research-based program entitled "Enhancing Teacher Questioning Skills."	1985-86	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Proposed and implemented the school board approved "MCC Attendance System," following two years of research.	1985-86	Student Learning
Implemented the "NCA Outcomes Accreditation" 3-year cycle process.	1984-85	Student Learning
Implemented a research-based, student teacher program encompassing the following topics: Introduction to MCC, Mastery Learning, Student Teacher Handbook, Lesson Design, Planning and Organization, and Special Services Familiarization.	1985-86	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning

Implemented the "Outcomes Based Curriculum Development" process.	1985-86	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented a research-based program entitled "Enhancing Lesson Design."	1986-87	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented a computer lab of IBM machines to enhance business student skills.	1986-87	Student Learning
Implemented a research-based program entitled "Teaching-Learning Cycle, Time-on-Task, Classroom Organization-Management, Principles of Learning."	1987-88	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented the "Intercom Silence" policy to safeguard academic time-on-task and create a more positive school climate.	1988-89	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented a research-based program entitled "A Review of Higher Order Questioning."	1988-89	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented two computer labs: Macintosh lab for English writing classes (to enhance student writing skills) and Apple 2GS lab for general student use.	1988-89	Student Learning
Implemented "Outcomes-Based Education" forums.	1989-90	Teacher Awareness
Implemented a research-based program entitled "Enhancing Student Study Skills."	1989-90	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented a research-based program entitled "Motivation Theory Revisited."	1990-91	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented a research-based program of "In-Depth Teacher Supervision."	1990-91	Teacher Effectiveness
Implemented "Educational Reform" forums.	1991-92	Teacher effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented "Parent/School Partnership" plan.	1992-93	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented "Authentic Achievement" staff development program.	1992-93	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning
Implemented the "MCC 2000 Committee."	1992-93	Teacher Effectiveness Student Learning

SOURCE: Richard Olthoff, Principal, Magic City Campus High School, Minot, North Dakota.

PUBLICATIONS

"If you want it to be remembered, put it in writing."

One of the most important charges given to public schools is to teach children to communicate through the proper use of language. Throughout the elementary grades the primary focus is on teaching and reinforcing the skills of reading, writing, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and pronunciation. In high school, more advanced uses of language are emphasized through creative writing, journalism, speech, and drama.

As an educational institution, how much effort and emphasis does your school place on utilizing these same communications skills to educate, inform, and enlist the support of your principal constituencies? Because it is a given (it is, isn't it?) that your school should be

doing this, this chapter will focus on the *hows* and not the *whys* of written communications from you and your school.

First and foremost, every written communication from your school must be well written, grammatically correct, and free of errors. You can never allow these seemingly small "details" to slide because you are pressed for time or are dealing with other issues. Once a publication reaches the hands of the intended readership, an image about your school (and your leadership) is created that may be difficult to undo without a great deal of time and effort. Therefore, it makes sense to ensure the quality of any publication up front.

If a publication from your school contains typos or spelling and grammatical errors; if it has inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading information; if it is visually hard to read because the type is too small or too faint or the layout is cluttered; if it is written above or below the average reading level of your targeted audience; readers may well draw comparisons between the quality of the publication and the quality of education you provide. Such publications send this hidden message: "You, the reader, aren't very important to me, the writer." That is a message no school leader can afford to send—to anyone!

School publications are an important, and somewhat unappreciated, form of communication. Although traditionally they have been used as vehicles for providing information to parents, with the advent of site-based management and similar decentralization concepts, educators should also adapt publications to provide information to other community groups as well.

There are a variety of different kinds of publications that schools can use effectively. You may need a brochure for one project and a flyer for another. These days everyone is inundated with incredible amounts of information on an enormous number of topics. Because people cannot possibly read everything available to them, most have become much more selective about what they choose to read. Some simply do not read much of anything; others, especially older and retired people, avidly read everything that comes their way. As a result, school publications must be adapted to these varied and changing information needs. You want your patrons to choose to read what you send them, so you must make it easy and appealing for them to do so.

To create or improve your school's communications/publications plan, ask yourself four questions:

1. Who? Determine the publication's audience. Who do you want to read it? Is it for staff, parents, students, the community at large, or a special interest group such as parents of a particular student population?

The targeted audience will determine how the publication is written and designed, as well as how it is distributed.

2. What? Determine the purpose of the publication. What do you want it to do? Is it to provide basic information about your school (programs, activities, etc.); to report on local, state, or national educational issues; to enhance your school's image with the community; to ask for help; to recognize achievement? Does the overall design reflect the purpose?

3. When? Decide not only the audience and the purpose of the publication, but also the frequency. Is it a one-shot item or an ongoing effort? Whether you send it out weekly, bimonthly, monthly, twice a year—if you are consistent, many in your targeted audience will begin to look for it. If the design is also consistent, always the same size and the same color, your intended readership will recognize it whether it is mixed in with their other mail, folded inside their child's backpack, or lying on the floor. Design the publication with those thoughts in mind.

4. How? Decide how best to communicate the information the publication is intended to disseminate, then determine a writing style to match. Is it appropriate for the audience and subject? Is it clear, focused, accurate, and interesting? Is the type size and style appropriate and easy to read? (For example, publications for young children and seniors should use a large, clear typeface. Children like lots of graphics and illustrations.) Is the reading level appropriate for the audience? (Use the Fog Index check discussed near the end of this chapter.)

Newsletters

Perhaps the most common type of published school communication is a newsletter. Desktop publishing by personal computer has greatly simplified the process of creating an attractive newsletter. There are several different commercially produced software packages on the market that are specifically designed for creating newsletters and similar publications. You can also buy graphics software that eliminates the need for pasting in "clip art" or having someone illustrate the page.

Four sample newsletters are enclosed at the end of this chapter: *Plymouth Profile*, *Raider Report*, *Magic City Campus Parent Newsletter*, and *Counselor's Corner*. Here are 10 commandments for a good newsletter:

1. Make it interesting. If no one wants to read your school's newsletter, you have wasted significant time and resources. Review

your concept with others, including intended members of the target audience. Get, and use, constructive advice. Remember: A newsletter is intended to accomplish something for a specific set of readers; it isn't a diary.

2. Follow the 30-3-30 principle. That means your newsletter is written to provide pertinent information whether the reader has 30 seconds, 3 minutes, or 30 minutes to spend. This is why it is important to use headlines with action verbs, subheads within blocks of copy, strong lead sentences, and first paragraphs that address the content of the story. For an outstanding example of the application of this principle, study *USA Today*'s presentation of the news.

3. Have an easily identifiable masthead that is used consistently. The masthead should incorporate:

- the name of the publication
- the school name
- an identifying logo (this could be the school mascot or a distinctive use of type)
- publication date
- statement of purpose (for example, "A Newsletter for Parents and Patrons" or "A Publication for Staff Members")
- the school address and phone number (this can also be placed at the bottom of the page)

4. Leave lots of white space. You don't have to fill every inch of space available. If you try to do so, the pages will look cluttered and be unappealing to the eye. Short paragraphs and a column format with plenty of space increase readability.

5. Use color for emphasis. In the interest of cost, most school newsletters use only one color of ink. However, you can "punch up" your newsletter by preprinting quantities of your masthead using two or more colors. These can then be run through the copy machine and printed on an as-needed basis. You can also stretch the use of color by using screens to create varied shades or overlapping two colors of ink to create a third.

One caution on using screens created with desktop publishing and laser printers: The quality and appearance diminish with each generation run on a copy machine and quickly begin to look muddy or smudged. Run a proof copy first and evaluate the effect. You may be better off eliminating screens and using borders to highlight copy instead.

If you opt for using colored paper for your newsletter, use soft neutral colors such as ivory or beige or pastels. Brighter colors may

attract attention, but they make the newsletter difficult to read. Save the neon colors for flyers.

6. Avoid endless columns of text. Use subheads, bullet copy, borders, graphs, and graphic art to add interest to the page and break up blocks of "gray" copy. Warning: Use art only if it relates to the story so it will be complementary rather than distractive. When using art, be sure that it is in the public domain or that you have purchased the right to use it (in a software package of clip art, for instance). Using comic strips from the local newspaper or other published art is in violation of copyright laws. No one is likely to go to the trouble to sue you, but it is unprofessional and could damage your credibility with key members of the constituency you want to build—especially the media!

7. Use consistent type elements. One of the pitfalls of computerized newsletters is the temptation to use every typeface available. Stick to one style of type for the body copy (text) and another for headlines. Body copy should generally be a serif type (letters have tails or flourishes that lead the eye to the next word) and headlines in sans serif (plain type without tails and flourishes) in a larger size than the body copy. Use bold or italic type for emphasis within a sentence. Never type body copy in all capital letters. Most copy, including headlines, should be printed in standard upper and lower case for readability. By the same token, do not print entire paragraphs in bold or italic.

8. Use photos judiciously. Before you use photos in your newsletter, be sure that you can ensure good reproductive quality. You may be able to use a computer scanner to place the photograph in your publication, but unless the copy machine you are using is capable of reproducing it so that it is clear and identifiable, you are better off leaving photos out. If your newsletter is printed on a press, you can have the photos stripped in by the printer and you won't have a problem. Like art, photos are effective only if they add to the story.

9. Use the best printer you can find. A laser printer is excellent, but if you don't have easy access to one, you might consider taking your newsletter to a local quick-print shop to have an original copy printed. For a minimal charge, they will print your newsletter on a high-quality laser printer or imagesetter. All you have to do is provide the computer disk with your newsletter copied on it exactly as you want it printed. You will then have a quality original from which to run your copies.

10. Make sure copies are clean and neat. Before you waste 800 sheets of paper running newsletters that turn out to be unreadable or crooked, take the time to run several proof copies and check them carefully for problems. While the copies are running, pull one periodically to

make sure it still looks good. You are better off catching a problem halfway through and correcting it, rather than catching it after the fact. Paper is expensive—and so is your time!

Parent and Community Newsletters

Publishing a regular newsletter gives you a chance to inform patrons about the positive education stories that apply to their school and stories that the local media don't know about, don't have room for, or don't choose to cover. It can be a monthly, biweekly, or weekly publication, depending on available time, energy, and resources. (As was mentioned earlier, the front pages of four sample newsletters are included at the end of this chapter.)

Traditionally, school newsletters have been distributed to parents only. But as more schools move toward building-level decision making and a greater level of community involvement, educational leaders need to create a news link to people and organizations and businesses that do not have children in school—groups that have been "outside the loop," heretofore.

One effective way to produce a quality newsletter (and to make sure all the key points previously discussed are met) is to create a newsletter team responsible for preparing and publishing it on time. This team could include teachers from different grade and subject levels, a parent or two, and the school secretary. Seek out retirees in your community with journalism or printing backgrounds who are willing to volunteer their help, or build a partnership with a local business that produces its own in-house newsletter and ask for assistance. Charge the newsletter team with responsibility for collecting information, writing articles, and preparing and designing the publication.

Principal Robert Ericson of North High School (Sheboygan, Wisconsin) uses students from the journalism department to write his monthly newsletter. He meets with the editors monthly and reviews with them the material to be included. The students contribute ideas, write articles, interview teachers, dig up facts about an event, and develop the art work.

You may wish to produce two monthly newsletters—one aimed specifically at parents and one targeted toward your school's nonparent community/business constituency. A newsletter for parents and the community (or whatever combination of audiences you wish to address) can follow a regular format of presenting information by subject areas such as student achievements, calendars of events, curriculum updates,

and tips for parents, or it can concentrate on a specific theme in order to provide comprehensive information about a topic or issue of interest.

If you are just beginning this process, use an early issue to survey your readers and gather input about the type of information that is most valuable to them. Just because you think your newsletter is terrific doesn't mean your readers find it relevant. If you are already in the newsletter business, you should do this reader survey annually.

Typically, timely newsletters do the following:

- Discuss various curriculum programs and how they impact student learning. Explain in lay terms the benefits of the new science lab or the reasons for using cooperative learning techniques.
- Highlight the achievements of students, staff, and volunteers.
- Review school rules and regulations, attendance and discipline policies.
- Inform parents how much homework to expect at each grade level and provide tips on how they can help their children.
- Provide age-appropriate reading lists and book reviews.
- Address issues of concern such as drug and alcohol abuse, gangs, guns, safety, and teen pregnancy. List community resources parents can access for help.
- Feature an outstanding school program and provide in-depth information.
- Share test results and explain how to interpret them.
- Profile a staff member, student, volunteer, or business partner.
- Explain how new legislation will impact your school, as well as your district.
- Provide updates on the activities and decisions of organizations such as school site councils.
- Provide updates on the activities of the PTA/PTO and student council.
- Include district news and information of interest to parents and community members.
- Address student health issues.
- Solicit volunteers for specific projects or ongoing programs.
- Offer special-focus issues on subjects such as building self-esteem, the importance of parent involvement, school/business partnerships, and cultural diversity.
- Inform about projects affecting the school site (for example, construction, remodeling, repairs, weather damage, parking lot problems, landscaping, and beautification projects). Major site projects often impact the local neighborhood and residents appreciate being informed in advance whenever possible.

Staff Newsletters

Although your staff should receive copies of the school newsletter along with parents and patrons, there is a lot of other information they need to know in order to be effective in their jobs. A staff newsletter can help provide them with that information. (A sample bulletin, "FYI: For Your Information," is at the end of Chapter 5.) The format should be simple and easy to read. Don't waste time with photos and graphics because this should be a quick "read and toss" publication, preferably one page front and back. Survey your staff and ask them about their information needs. Involve them in making it their publication.

Items for the staff newsletter might include:

- Information about colleagues: retirements, new staff members, illnesses, births, deaths, promotions, awards, and achievements
- Review of policies, procedures, and state and federal mandates
- Testing information
- Governing board actions or proposals (if your district does not have a publication for this purpose)
- New legislation affecting schools
- Grade level reports
- Curriculum updates and adoptions
- Teaching tips and ideas
- Professional growth opportunities
- Ideas for communicating with parents
- School concerns and problems
- Upcoming events and meeting schedules
- News from around the district
- Student discipline information

Student Newsletters

Don't overlook the importance of student newsletters in communicating the good news about your school. Although student newsletters are written by and for students, you can bet parents read them, too. Under the guidance of staff or community volunteers, students can apply the techniques discussed earlier in this chapter to create interesting and informative newsletters.

Items for student newsletters might include:

- Student council information and decisions
- Interviews with staff members or community members

- Reports on classroom projects and school activities
- Information about school and district events
- Book and movie reviews
- Creative writing and poetry
- Homework tips
- Lunch recipes
- Information about community service projects
- Student profiles focusing on cultural diversity

Distributing Your Newsletter

How you choose to distribute your newsletter will depend a great deal on the frequency of your publication and your financial resources. Some possible distribution methods are:

- U.S. mail. Schools qualify for a nonprofit bulk rate permit, the cheapest postage rate available. You pay a yearly permit fee and a per-piece cost for each mailing. In order to take advantage of the bulk mail rate, you must mail a minimum of 200 pieces of the same item and they must be grouped by zip codes. Your district office may already have a bulk mail permit that you can use. You can also mail first class (which does not have to be grouped by zip code), but this is an expensive option best reserved for critical communications with individual parents.

Obviously, you have access to an address list of parents, but you should also consider mailing to other residents in your school community. Through a specialty service, you can purchase mailing labels for all residences in a designated area, but these are expensive even for a one-time purchase. You can also use a direct mail service, but again this is expensive and you pay on a per-use basis. Building your own mailing list is time-consuming, but can be accomplished using city directories, volunteer help, and the assistance of organizations such as chambers of commerce, which already have the lists you may need of businesses in your area.

- Newspapers and free throw publications. Check with your local newspaper or *Pennysaver* about inserting your newsletter for distribution in your attendance area.

- Community-based drop-off. Ask permission to leave stacks of newsletters in the offices of doctors, dentists, real estate agents, veterinarians, and other professionals in your school community. Take copies of your newsletter to retirement homes and apartment complexes and ask that they be distributed. Some banks, restaurants, and grocery and convenience stores may also be willing to let you leave some

newsletters on display. Be sure to get permission before leaving them, however, or they may end up being thrown in the trash by an irritated proprietor or store manager—which won't build a positive image for you or your school.

- Door-to-door delivery. Check with school-based scout troops or other student organizations to see if they might distribute newsletters door-to-door as a community service project or as a fund-raiser. They may be willing to take it on as a regular project at a cost much less than that of mailing.
- Student delivery. The old standby is to send parent newsletters home with students. This works better in the primary grades than it does at the intermediate, middle, or high school levels. To conserve costs and cut down on waste, you might try sending the newsletter home with only the youngest child in a family. Be sure that some statement such as "A Newsletter for Parents" is near the masthead, so there is no mistaking for whom the publication is intended.

Monthly Calendar/Menu

An inexpensive and effective way to keep parents informed of upcoming events is to send out a one-page combination calendar/menu that can be posted on the refrigerator for quick reference. There are some great computer software packages available specifically for creating calendars. At the top of the calendar page, add the phone number of the attendance clerk, the office, and the homework hot line if you have one. Use the back side of the page to list student achievements such as student of the month, honor roll, improvement awards, and contest winners. This will get important information to parents and save you space in your regular newsletter for more detailed articles.

Many schools still print separate wall calendars or combination handbook/calendars. These look great. However, the downside is that they are expensive to print and, usually, by the time school starts some events have already been rescheduled.

Parent/Student Handbooks

A parent/student handbook is an important publication that every school needs. It provides vital information about your school and district policies and sets the guidelines for cooperation between parents and educators. Handbooks are most valuable to educators if designed

to be used as a reference and guide for student conduct and similar purposes. If rules and regulations are written in too much detail, you may find yourself boxed into a corner when dealing with a particular issue. Your handbook should contain general guidelines that allow you flexibility in dealing with a variety of situations while remaining within the bounds of district policy.

Involve your school site council or other parents and staff members in helping to develop the contents of your handbook. By including those who will be using it, you will end up with a publication that better serves the needs of your school. Even if your school district provides such a handbook to parents, a supplement addressing issues specific to your school would be very useful.

Subjects that should be included in the handbook (if not otherwise covered in writing to parents):

- Attendance
- Code of conduct
- Dress code
- Discipline
- Academics
- Student activities
- Student and parent rights
- Health care and regulations
- Transportation
- Safety programs
- Parent involvement
- Philosophy and goals

The 1992-93 Activities Directory for Plymouth (Minnesota) Middle School (at chapter's end) is an excellent example of an easy-to-update, do-it-yourself handbook. Information is typed on both sides of four letter-size pieces of regular-weight copier paper. When folded lengthwise in half and stapled twice in the center, these 4 pages become 16 pages in the booklet. For the sample, only 6 of the 16 pages are reproduced.

Brochures and Flyers

Brochures and flyers are useful for promoting specific programs or events. They contain topic-specific information, usually on one page, sometimes on a front-back format. Due to space limitations inherent in this type of publication, your copy must be concise and to the point. If

you try to include too much information, you may not have the space to make it look attractive. Decide on the most important information and concentrate on presenting it in an interesting and understandable format.

Some possible topics for brochures and flyers are:

- Preschool programs
- Kindergarten programs
- Special education programs
- Volunteer programs
- After-school programs
- School/business partnerships
- Homework
- Magnet programs
- Athletics
- Honors programs
- Fine arts programs
- Sex education-HIV/AIDS curriculum

Brochures. Good brochures use graphic art or photographs to add interest and break up the copy. You can also use borders, dashes, bullets, and white space to create an interesting look. If you plan to use photographs, it is best to use white paper and black ink, otherwise the photos may not look natural. Add color by adding a second color ink to headlines or art. If you use colored paper, stick to neutrals and pastels for readability.

The most common sizes used in brochures are 8½ × 11 inch (letter-size paper) or 8½ × 14 inch (legal-size paper). These sizes are also the easiest and least expensive to produce and can be used with most copy machines. Different looks can be created with different folds. Brochures can be folded in half, in thirds, in quarters, and with variations on these. You can get lots of ideas by collecting brochures that you find attractive and studying their layouts and the different ways in which they are folded. Visit a local print shop and ask them to show you some samples.

If you don't have a folding machine you may want to consider having a printer or quick-copy outlet prepare your brochure. You may be able to talk them into letting you provide the printed sheets and charging you only for the folding. Otherwise, be prepared to bring in the troops to fold your brochures by hand.

Flyers. Flyers are used generally to announce an event. They are usually one-sided and contain a minimum of information, but that information is displayed in an eye-catching format. Use attention-getting, bright-colored paper for flyers as there is not a lot of copy to read. Extra large type and graphics can enhance the message and entice people to read it. By using a computer to do your layout, you might stack two or three repetitions of your announcement on one sheet, then cut the sheet into halves or thirds after copying.

Language

If there are a large number of non-English-speaking parents in your school community, consider producing parent newsletters, brochures, flyers, handbook inserts, calendars (in short, anything you want a parent to read) in English on one side of the page and in the home language on the opposite side. Make sure your translations are written by someone who has a written (not just oral) knowledge of that foreign language.

Suggestions for Better Writing

These writing suggestions were developed by Bob Grossman (1979), educational public relations consultant:

- Nouns
  - Simplify complex nouns.
  - Look for nouns that can be changed to strong verbs.
  - Use specific nouns rather than general.
- Verbs
  - Strengthen verbs.
  - Reduce the number of linking verbs.
  - Use active, visual verbs.
- Other parts of speech
  - Eliminate needless adverbs.
  - Eliminate weak adjectives.
  - Avoid too many pronouns.
  - Avoid needless adverbs modifying adjectives.
  - Eliminate excessive numbers of prepositional phrases.
- Vocabulary
  - Cut jargon.

Reduce the number of multisyllabic words.
Use vocabulary appropriate to the audience.

- Sentences
  - Strive for shorter sentences.
  - Vary sentence length.
  - Be careful of compound subjects and verbs.
  - Use subject-verb-object word order.
- Content
  - Concentrate on specifics rather than abstracts.
  - Resist the temptation to be legally specific.
  - Get to the message quickly.
  - Organize thoughts into logical order.
- Style
  - Eliminate *there*.
  - Write in short paragraphs when possible.
  - Put words that demand emphasis at the beginning or end of the sentence.
  - Limit each sentence to one or two thoughts.
  - Don't overuse transitional words and phrases.

The Fog Index

The Fog Index is a device used to estimate the reading level appropriate for your publication. Keep in mind that most successful publications write to a general reading level of ninth grade or less. Try conducting a Fog Index on a sample story from a popular general publication (such as *Reader's Digest*, *USA Today*, or your local newspaper) and comparing it against your own writing.

- Step 1. Select a 100-word sample of writing.
- Step 2. Find the average number of words per sentence in the sample. If the 100th word is in the middle of a sentence, count the rest of the words in that sentence and use that number to compute the average.
- Step 3. Count the number of words in the 100-word sample that have three or more syllables. Do not count proper names or three-syllable verb forms ending in -ing, -ed, or -es.
- Step 4. Add the average number of words per sentence to the number of three-syllable words and multiply by 0.4.

The result is an estimate of the reading level required to understand your writing. The Fog Index is affected mainly by two factors: the level of vocabulary and the length of the sentences. The purpose of

using the Fog Index is to make sure your newsletter copy can be understood by the intended audience.

Proofreading Tips

One of the bonuses of computer publishing technology is the ability to spell check and grammar check your writing. But that does not eliminate the need to proofread your articles, especially names and numbers that the computer cannot identify. It is worth a little extra time to ensure accurate copy.

- Have someone other than the writer proofread the copy. Better still, have more than one person proof it.
- Proof the copy backwards, beginning with the last word. This helps to catch mistakes you may miss because of reading too fast (even though you're trying to read slowly and carefully).
- Mistakes tend to cluster. Watch for more than one typo in a sentence or paragraph.
- Watch for changes in typeface or type style.
- Check the sequence of page numbers.
- Check all call-outs (continued to page . . ./continued from page . . .).
- Check for complete parentheses, brackets, and quotation marks. Check that punctuation marks face the proper direction.
- Check the spelling of all names.
- Check all addresses and phone numbers. Watch for transposed numbers.
- Check that photos and cutlines match.
- Check for punctuation marks. Omitted periods are easy to overlook.

References and Suggested Readings

Arizona School Public Relations Association. (1986). *Six pack of public relations ideas for principals* (Pocket folder). Phoenix: Author.

Grossman, B. (1979). *Writing for school administrators*. Unpublished master's thesis. Glassboro State University, Glassboro, NJ.

Illinois Association of School Boards. (1987, Summer). Five basic school publications. *Communications Tips*. (Newsletter available from IASB, Springfield, IL)

National School Public Relations Association. (1986). *School public relations: The complete book*. Arlington, VA: Author.

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PLYMOUTH PROFILE

Information for parents from the staff of Plymouth Middle School

"Partners With Parents in Education" **November 1992**

FALL CONFERENCES SCHEDULED

Parent/Teacher Conferences will be held Thursday, November 12, Tuesday November 17, Thursday, November 19 from 4-8 p.m., and on Friday, November 20 from 7:20 to 9:40 a.m.

This year our Parent/Teacher Conference Committee has recommended that we try a new conferencing format. Although we have had positive response to our past conferencing format, we are always looking for ways to improve.

You and your child will meet at a specific time with your daughter's/son's advisor for 20 minutes. Since these conferences are about the students, we believe it is important for them to be involved in the process.

- We are aware that there may be a few teachers that you wish to see to answer questions about their classes that the advisor was unable to answer, or, perhaps you wish to just briefly meet your child's other teachers. Therefore, there will be an open 20 minutes per hour when no teacher is scheduled for an advisor/advisee conference. At this time you are welcome to see any teacher of your choice. Counselors and other support staff will also be available during conference times.

Some advantages are:

- conferencing time per student will be reduced to 20-40 minutes,
- the uninterrupted conference will allow you and the advisor to discuss your child's attributes and any concerns in depth,
- you will have total privacy during conferencing,
- you have the option to see other teachers,
- your conference will be scheduled so there will be very little waiting,
- the advisor has only 18-20 advisees to get to know and to prepare to conference,
- involving the child will improve communications between teachers, students and parents.

If you have a special concern or questions you wish to discuss at conferences, please call the advisor ahead of time and she/he will gather the data needed to address your concerns.

You have received information by mail regarding appointments for conferencing. Please be sure you have returned the sign-up sheet to your child's advisor.

If you are interested in volunteering at the school (two or three hours a week), please call the school office, 544-9147, leave your name and phone number and someone will return the call to you.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 281
Robbinsdale Area Schools
Learning for a lifetime of growing

SOURCE: Plymouth Middle School, Plymouth, Minnesota.

RAIDER

April 1993 North High School

Students of the month

The administration, faculty and staff of North High School are pleased to announce the recipients of the "Student of the Month" award for February. Award recipients are selected by the faculty of each respective department in recognition of their achievement during the previous month. The recipients are:

Art	Lori Wolfgram
Business Education	Mark Schmidt
Foreign Language	Diana Covey
Health	See Vang
Family & Consumer Ed.	Shelly Joppich
Industrial Technology	Michelle Gazo
Language Arts	Andrea Jeske
Math	Josh Kalk
Music	Melanie Opel
Physical Education	Kristine Jones
Science	Anne Smith
Social Studies	Betty Leonhard
Special Education	Christopher Krause

National Merit finalist

Denny Yunk was named as a National Merit Finalist recently. He is one of about 14,000 students nationwide selected from over one million students for this honor. Selection is based on individual scores on the PSAT taken during the students' sophomore year.

As a finalist, Denny will be considered for one of 2,000 National Merit $2,000 scholarships, or one of approximately 4,500 corporate-sponsored scholarships, or about 3,200 college-sponsored scholarships.

Announcement of scholarship awards will be made in March and April.

Co-editors
Erin Nelson & Jessica Case

Books needed for annual book sale

Used books are needed by the Sheboygan Y's Women, a service group of the Y.M.C.A., for their annual book sale to be held March 26 & 27. Proceeds from the sale will be used for various youth programs and Y.M.C.A. equipment.

Books and records are being accepted now. They may be dropped off at the Sheboygan Y.M.C.A. or you may call 457-9424 for a pick-up only within the city limits.

Students win Bucks tickets

Six North High students were honored as part of the school's incentive program on Sun. Mar. 7 at the Milwaukee Bucks versus the Detroit Pistons game.

These students were given Bucks basketball tickets as recognition for their involvement in school activities. The students recognized this time were sophomores Heather Brasted and Theresa Carpenter, juniors Phil Carpenter and Tim (Jay) Coughlon, senior Debbie Rieth and Jacob Wiegand.

8th grade shadowing program

This is the second year that a number of selected eighth graders from Urban Middle School have spent a day at North visiting classes with a ninth grader. The purpose of this program is to give these eighth graders an opportunity to see North from the perspective of a student to help ease their concern about coming to the "big high school."

Volunteer freshmen act as hosts and hostesses to visiting eighth graders and each host/hostess takes one eighth grader to all their classes including lunch. At the end of the day, all visiting students (3-4 a day) meet together with Mr. Schultz to discuss their impressions and reactions.

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Career programs offered to students

The Wisconsin Career Information System (WCIS) and Discovery Systems are both available to students in the counseling center. Both of these programs have work stations which are able to assist North High School students in their exploration of career and post secondary education information. These systems are excellent tools for all students and are able to answer questions from the simple to the more complex.

Students are welcome to use these computers before and after school, during lunch period or during a studyhall time. These systems give students an excellent opportunity to develop and/or work closer toward reaching their personal goals.

The Local Scholarship process is moving along quite well with the various donors making their selections between April 12th through the 30th. Students are reminded to listen to the daily announcements as a few local scholarships with their own applications are coming in. Further information and actual applications can be obtained from the Counseling Center. An update in regards to the Miscellaneous Scholarship listing that appeared in the last Raider Report follows:

NAME	DEADLINE
Beta Sigma Phi	April 15
Cleveland Athletic Club	May 1
Didion Incorporated/Agriculture	April 10
Manitowoc County Extension Homemakers	April 1
Manitowoc County Sheriff's Department	April 15
Plymouth Trail Riders	May 1
Sheboygan County Farm Progress	April 15
Sheboygan Rotary Scholarship	April 9

Important dates for seniors

As the end of the school year becomes closer, there are some very important dates that graduating seniors should have clearly marked on their calendars. These dates are:

May 7—Prom	8 pm American Club
May 8—EXPO	6:30 pm North
May 19—Scholarship Night	7 pm North
May 20—Senior Banquet	6 pm
May 26—Senior Class Meeting	Hours 1 & 2
May 27—All School Awards	7 pm North
June 4—Baccalaureate	7:30 pm North
June 4—Senior Class Picture	6:45 pm North Gym
June 6—Graduation	2 pm Vollrath Bowl

Bucks ticket winners for April

Six North High students will be honored as part of the school's incentive program on Thurs. April 8 at the Milwaukee Bucks versus the Miami Heat game.

These students are given Bucks basketball tickets as recognition for their involvement in school activities. The students recognized this time are freshmen Jessica Oglan and Jennifer King, sophomores Amy Klusmeier and Jason Robert Fischer, and senior Beau Stricker.

SASD publishes school performance report

The Sheboygan Area School District has published its School Performance Report, a new state-mandated publication that provides a comprehensive overview of the district's schools.

Wisconsin is one of about a dozen states nationwide that have statewide performance reporting requirements. This "report card" mandate designates a specified set of mandatory education indicators that must be included in all district reports.

Sheboygan's indicators - for both individual school and the district - rank above the statewide average in most areas.

As part of the mandate, copies of the School Performance Report must be made available to parents of district students. Copies of the report have been sent home with elementary school students. If you would like a copy of the 1992 School Performance Report, please pick one up in your child's school, or have your child request one at the office to bring home. Copies are also available at Central Support Facility, 830 Virginia Avenue.

Sheboygan County Youth Government Day

The following students have been chosen to take part in the Sheboygan County Youth Government Day, to be held on April 15:

Office	Name
Sheriff	T.J. Mlada
Coroner	Nathan Tarkowski
Clerk of Courts	Elizabeth Chambers
Register of Deeds	Kenneth Anderson
District Attorney	Laura Richter
County Clerk	Amy Griessmeyer
County Board Chairman	Jenny Gruber

SOURCE: North High School, Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

Magic City Campus
Parent Newsletter

Third Quarter *January, 1993*

2nd Quarter Perceptions

The 2nd quarter at Magic City Campus has been a relatively smooth one in terms of student productivity and instructional performance. Teaching and learning continues to operate at an optimum level; one that truly focuses on learner behavior outcomes. MCC parents, students, and educators have much to be proud of as we assess the strengths and weaknesses of this quality learning facility.

School district finances, however, continue to be a "dark cloud" on the horizon as our district is forced into the position of having to reduce the 1993-94 budget by 1.3 million dollars if we are to stave off eventual bankruptcy. The net result of these projected reductions is that they will have a significantly negative impact on the ***quality*** of teaching and learning experiences not only for MCC students but for all students in the Minot Public School District. We need to somehow resolve the financial dilemma and then, begin building our district back to one where quality again reigns.

Enough "dark cloud" stuff!!!!!!!! We have had a number of positive happenings during the 2nd quarter at MCC. Some of the more positive reflections include the following:

- the November 12 parent/school partnership activity focusing on student quarter grades and a financial aids seminar was well attended by parents. The collaborative discussion between teachers and parents and the financial aids information will serve as a great foundation as we forge ahead in efforts to help youth grow and develop in a positive way.

- the November 30 parent/school partnership activity focusing on "current issues of youth" was a dynamite evening for educators, parents, and students. Exciting and productive, the evening's program of activities can do nothing but enhance our partnership foundation of helping youth.

the staff and students were notified in December that Magic City Campus is being recognized by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction as an "exemplary" high school in the state of North Dakota. Our school, along with Bismarck Century, has been nominated to represent the state of North Dakota nationally in the "U.S. Department of Education Secondary School Recognition Competition."

The state of North Dakota will be arranging for an award presentation at Magic City Campus sometime during the months of April or May. If our school is ultimately considered for honors at the national level, a review team from Washington, D.C. will conduct an on-site visit sometime between March 1 and April 16.

Regardless of our fate nationally (we realistically have a great chance to win), all students, parents, educators, and other community members should feel a tremendous sense of pride and accomplishment in this most recent honor of their school.

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COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS JANUARY 12-14

Comprehensive semester exams will be given to MCC students in mid-January. They will be carefully planned summative assessments that measure student learning. These exams will reflect the following philosophy:

- they will be weighted as part of the final grade in the class.
- they will reflect the course outcomes and sum up student learning.
- they will be used by instructional staff to judge the overall quality of the course in fostering student retention of learning outcomes.

Three comprehensive exams will be administered on January 12, two exams on the morning of January 13, and two exams on the morning of January 14. Friday morning, January 15, will be used to provide "knowledge of results" back to students concerning their academic performance on the exams.

All students will be involved in the testing and knowledge of results process with the following exceptions:

- those students in semester and year-long classes who have earned an "A" in both the 1st and 2nd quarters.
- those students in quarter classes (i.e. Government, Economics, and Physical Education) who have earned an "A" during their 2nd quarter class.

The school encourages those students exempt from comprehensive testing due to "A" grades to consider voluntarily taking their exams. Taking an exam can be a tremendous learning experience and certainly prepares college-bound youth for college test-taking experiences.

Due to the fact that this testing process is a comprehensive one, school officials suggest to parents that you reinforce to your children the message that preparing for these exams must be a priority "1" decision. The experience is so significant that considerable time has been allowed students for voluntary test preparation/study on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons.

College Information Service

Are you looking for answers about financial aid, student loans, campus-based aid programs, and contact persons on each of the campuses in the state of North Dakota? If so, contact one of the following counselors at Magic City Campus for this information:

Steve Joyal
857-4542

Dick Butts
857-4552

Marcy Blikre
857-4522

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If I try, knowing there is little hope of succeeding,
I risk failure.
Not to try assures it.
-- Anonymous

SOURCE: Magic City Campus High School, Minot, North Dakota.

From the Counselor's Corner

Logan-Rogersville High School, Route 4, Box 75, Rogersville, MO 65742

Vol. 1, No. 2 December, 1992

Semester Finals

It is hard to believe that the first semester is almost over! Since January 12 marks the end of the first half of the school year, comprehensive final exams are right around the corner for LRHS students. Students should begin spending small periods of time each evening reviewing their notes, textbook chapters, etc. Students often wait until one or two days before exams to start studying. Panic sets in as they are overwhelmed by the abundance of material before them. Thus, low test performance often results. Students are advised to pace themselves, digesting a portion of material each day.

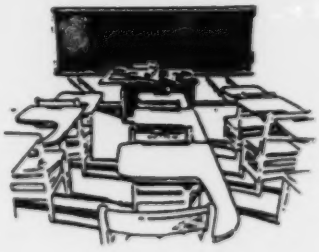
Exams for class periods 2, 4, and 6 will be given January 11. Exams for class periods 1, 3, 5, and 7 will be given January 12. Tests will be one class period in length. Students should get a good night's rest and eat a nutritious breakfast on test day. (Eat your Wheaties!)

Attendance

If your son or daughter has acquired more than nine absences this semester, he/she will need to write a letter of appeal to Mr. Hetherington. Any written excuses from doctors, dentists, etc., will need to be turned in at this time. The appeals committee will meet January 7 to determine whether semester credit will be granted in the case of excessive absences. Parents will be notified before this date if they need to attend the appeal meeting. Anyone who needs more information may call the high school office at 753-2813 and speak with Mr. Hetherington.

Speaking of attendance, our students have an average attendance of over 95% this semester!

The annual parent-teacher conferences were a big success. Faculty and staff were pleased to have the opportunity to meet with parents. If you have concerns and questions regarding your child's education, we encourage you to contact the school and arrange for a conference with teachers throughout the school year. Student success is enhanced by effective communication between the school and the home.



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College Requirements Change

Southwest Missouri State University (SMSU) and the four campuses of the University of Missouri System have adopted a new, more restrictive admission policy. For SMSU, the policy will become effective with the admission of students for the fall, 1996. This is the current ninth grade class. For the University of Missouri System, the new admission policy will begin in the fall, 1997. It is crucial that students and parents are aware of these changes and meet the course requirements if students plan to attend one of these universities.

Here are the new requirements for each institution:

SMSU

ENGLISH--4 units, one of which may be speech or debate; 2 units emphasizing composition or writing skills are required.
MATHEMATICS--3 units (Algebra, Intermediate Algebra, Geometry)
SOCIAL STUDIES--2 units
SCIENCE--2 units (not including General Science), one of which must be a lab course
VISUAL/PERFORMING ARTS--1 unit
ELECTIVES--3 units, selected from foreign language and combinations of the above courses, etc. (Two units of foreign language are strongly recommended.)

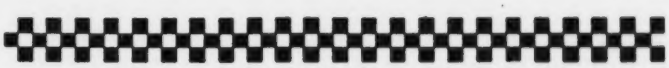
These course requirements are in addition to the current ACT and class rank requirement.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI SYSTEM

ENGLISH--4 units, one of which may be speech or debate; 2 units emphasizing composition or writing skills are required.
MATHEMATICS--4 units in Algebra I or higher level courses
SCIENCE--3 units of science (not including General Science), one of which must be a laboratory course. The three science units must include units from at least two of the following areas: physical science, biology, physics, chemistry, and earth science.
SOCIAL STUDIES--3 units
FINE ARTS--1 unit to be taken in visual arts, music (e.g., band, orchestra, music appreciation, music theory), dance or theater.
FOREIGN LANGUAGE--2 units of a single foreign language

Grade Cards

First semester grade cards will be issued to students in their second period classes on Friday, January 22. Students must clear all library, shop, art fines, etc., in order to receive grade cards.



SOURCE: Rita Jackson, Counselor, Logan-Rogersville High School.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 281
Robbinsdale Area Schools
Learning for a lifetime of growing

1992-93

ACTIVITIES DIRECTORY

Plymouth Middle School

NONDISCRIMINATION INFORMATION

District 281 does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or handicap in admission, treatment or access to its programs and activities, or in employment in its programs and activities. The district has designated two individuals to coordinate efforts to comply with federal laws and regulations.

Jackie Fraedrich is the designated coordinator under Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 (nondiscrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities, including employment and admission). She is responsible for coordinating district efforts to comply with Title IX, including investigation of complaints alleging noncompliance or alleging any actions prohibited by Title IX.

Gwen Martinson is the designed coordinator under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (nondiscrimination on the basis of handicap including admission, treatment or access to programs and activities, including employment in its programs or activities). She is responsible for coordinating district efforts to comply with Section 504.

Inquiries concerning Title IX and Section 504 may be directed to Jackie Fraedrich and Gwen Martinson at Independent School District 281, 4148 Winnetka Avenue North, New Hope, Minnesota 55427, phone number (612) 533-2781.

INTRODUCTION

Extracurricular programs are an important part of student life at Plymouth Middle School. The PMS staff believes that middle level students possess a uniqueness that requires educational experiences in all areas of child growth. At PMS students have opportunities to participate in over 25 activities including programs in athletics, fine arts, service and academics. These activities provide excellent opportunities for teamwork, leadership development, social growth, team spirit and respect for others. We invite you to encourage your son or daughter to participate in as many activities as his or her abilities and time allow.

ATHLETICS

PARTICIPATION

All PMS students are encouraged and welcome to participate in athletics regardless of their skills. **Emphasis is on skill development with participation for all.**

Grade six
PMS sixth graders may participate in an intramural program. Starting dates and activities are announced on the PA system and in home base throughout the year.

Grades seven, eight
Seventh and eighth grade PMS students have the opportunity to participate in the interscholastic athletic program. Teams compete against other seventh and eighth grade teams from the Lake Conference.

SEASONS

PMS has a four-season activity program. The staff at PMS believes that the four-season format gives students an opportunity to participate in more activities and uses our facilities more efficiently.

The four seasons are Fall, Winter I, Winter II and Spring.

Fall	Boys' Football 8
	Boys'/Girls' Soccer 7, 8
	Girls' Swimming 7, 8
	Girls' Tennis 7, 8
	Girls' Volleyball 7, 8
	Boys'/Girls' Cross Country 6, 7, 8

Winter I	Boys' Wrestling 6, 7, 8 Girls' Basketball 7, 8
Winter II	Boys' Basketball 7, 8 Boys' Swimming 7, 8
Spring	Boys'/Girls' Golf 7, 8 Boys' Track 6, 7, 8 Boys' Tennis 7, 8 Girls' Track 6, 7, 8 Girls' Softball 7, 8

ATHLETIC FEES

The school board requires an equipment usage fee for grades seven and eight in order to place a portion of the cost of athletics on those who participate. The equipment fee is $25 for football and wrestling and $15 for other sports. Students who have paid the fee and subsequently withdraw may apply for a refund. Normally, refunds are not given after the first contest in the sport. In addition, we require and hold in escrow a $15 equipment deposit until the end of the sport season. When the student turns in all equipment/uniforms issued, the entire deposit may be claimed. Since uniforms cost more than $15, we ask that all uniforms be returned. *Students must provide their own towels for athletic activities and for physical education classes.*

ACTIVITY BUS

Activity buses are provided for students who participate in after-school activities. Buses depart from the door by the flagpole at 4 p.m. and from the east parking lot at 4:45 and 5:45 p.m. Routes are posted in the outer office area. All activity routes are planned to provide transportation within a reasonable distance of the student's home.

Note: *There are no activity buses on Friday.*

Boys' Football

Adviser's name: T. Becker
Where to locate advisers: T. Becker, Office 365
Practice time and place: After school on the PMS athletic fields.
Length and time of season: Fall — September 8-November 6.
Equipment required: Football shoes and mouthpiece.
Description: All eighth grade students are eligible. Heavy and light squads are the two teams that make up the PMS football program. The division of players is generally made according to the size of players with consideration given to ability. Basic fundamentals are taught using the four essential teaching techniques demonstration, explanation, execution and repetition. Shared playing time is a high priority.

Boys' and Girls' Soccer

Adviser's name: R. Virnig, grade eight
Where to locate adviser: Boys' PE office
Practice time and place: After school on the PMS athletic fields.
Length and time of season: Fall — September 8-November 6.
Equipment required: Soccer shoes and shin guards.
Description: All seventh and eighth grade students who have an interest in soccer are eligible. Emphasis is placed on participation and developing soccer skills. Workout, conditioning and games are matched to level of play and ability. Students can expect to participate in physical conditioning, skill development and game tactics. PMS teams play other teams from the Lake Conference.

Girls' Swimming

Adviser's name: D. Esposito
Where to locate adviser: Swimming pool office, extension 475
D. Esposito, Office 367
Practice time and place: After school in the PMS pool area.
Length and time of season: Fall — September 8-November 6.
Equipment required: Swimming suit, goggles, towel.
Description: All seventh and eighth grade girls interested in swimming are eligible. Students from the two grades compete on one PMS team. National Federation rules and events are followed. PMS swimming teams compete against other schools in the Lake Conference.

MEDIA RELATIONS

"Reporters . . . a principal's best friend? Strange but true. Film at 10."

Even the most articulate educational leader, with the most carefully developed and implemented community assessment and communications strategies, may be painfully uncomfortable when dealing with the media. To educators, media coverage too often calls to mind memories of bad news reported or having been misquoted, misinterpreted, and/or accused of hiding the truth. To a certain degree these perceptions stem from a general misconception of the media's role in covering education. It is easier to

place blame than to face the fact that education advocates have not been proactive enough in getting their message out.

Educators have a lot to brag about, but are usually too busy doing their jobs to spend time broadcasting their successes. But in this age of instant news, if you want to attract communitywide support and involvement you can no longer afford to be modest about your school's accomplishments. The purpose of this chapter is to cast the idea-net as wide as possible so that no matter where you are on the road of media relations, there will be something here that makes the trip a little quicker and the path a little smoother.

To begin, take a few minutes and conduct a simple analysis of one month's newspaper coverage of your school or school district. Make a copy of everything that was printed: meeting announcements, letters to the editor, photos, news, feature stories—everything. Now rate each one as positive, negative, or neutral in content. Count the number in each category and compare it to the overall number of stories printed. You will probably discover that the positive and neutral stories will outnumber the negative ones by a sizable margin.

But if you want to do a better job of managing the small percentage of negative news, then you and your team must assume more responsibility for initiating positive stories. And you must assist the media in obtaining more complete information about those stories that are not so positive.

The dictionary describes news as "recent events and happenings, especially those that are unusual or notable." The three key words here are *recent*, *unusual*, and *notable*. An Arbor Day ceremony featuring the superintendent and governing board president turning the first shovel of dirt may be recent, but it is neither unusual nor notable. On the other hand, the fifth grade field trip to the burned area of a state park to plant trees purchased with money earned from a recycling project is unusual and notable enough that it just might get sent out by a wire service. Remember, you are competing for news space and airtime with every other school and agency in town, as well as nationwide. If you want coverage, your story must stand out.

News is the creation of the reporter, not the source. If a reporter doesn't see an event as newsworthy and doesn't report on it, it is, for all practical purposes, "non-news." However, if the reporter's attention is attracted to something unusual (whether good or bad by district standards), you'd better believe it will become news.

As an educational leader, you want the public to know when children in your school are excited about learning and are succeeding

in the classroom. But is it news? From a reporter's perspective, the school is just doing its job—and that is not news. In this context, think about what is being reported about education of late. People constantly hear that public education is in need of radical reform, that public education is wasteful and ineffective, that students are not learning basic skills, that schools need to be run more like businesses, and so forth. In other words, it is when schools are not doing their job that education becomes newsworthy. Once you realize that it is the media's job to inform the community about what is happening, good or bad, and that the community expects to be so informed, then you can develop strategies about the best way to get news concerning your school covered in a positive manner.

Build a Working Relationship With Reporters

Contact and cooperation are the keys to building a successful relationship with news reporters. Respect the reporter's task of covering the story as thoroughly, accurately, responsibly, and objectively as possible. Remember that the reporter answers to an editor or news director. Let's hope that the reporter, in turn, respects your task of educating children with as few disruptions as possible, and remembers that you answer to a superintendent, a board, and the public as well. When reporters and educators deal honestly, openly, and fairly with each other, the news reported will reflect that.

A reporter is a person with a job to do, just like you. Most of them are trying conscientiously to do the best job they can, just like you. It is fascinating to hear educational leaders talk about "cutting the reporters out of the story" or making access to information difficult for them. Then these same leaders wonder why they get such lousy coverage. You don't appreciate someone who makes your job or life more difficult, do you? Why should they?

There is an old journalism saying: "Never argue with anyone who buys ink by the barrel, and paper by the ton." To that admonition, add "or who controls 3 hours of prime-time TV every night." Much of the negative media coverage generated about local schools can be traced back to some action or remark made by somebody in a school district who forgot these basic truths.

The most effective way of getting positive news coverage is to cooperate with the media. Treat them courteously and provide information about problems. Don't withhold it in the mistaken belief that they might not find out, or will drop the subject and just go away. If you

accommodate them on the negative stories, they will usually accommodate you when you want the positive stories run as well.

Principal John Baldwin of Shreveport, Louisiana, offers some excellent advice on how to deal with reporters: "I have cultivated personal relationships with key reporters by being completely candid with them, even when it was painful to do so. This has paid rich dividends when I needed them. I also try to be sensitive to the media's interest in innovation and controversy."

Tips for Working With Reporters

- Get to know the reporters in your community! Get to know the reporters in your community! This bears repeating a third time. Get to know the reporters in your community! Pay attention to bylines in the newspapers and familiarize yourself with the writing style of the reporters who cover education. Most large daily papers have a writer assigned to the education beat. On smaller dailies, this reporter may have other coverage duties in addition to education. Watch the local television news shows and note the kinds of stories individual reporters are assigned to cover. When the reporter known for handling investigative assignments calls you, you'll know it's not for information about the annual school carnival—unless someone has accused a committee member of embezzling funds.

- Be knowledgeable about your state's open records laws and your school district's policies on the release of information. Determine up front what is public information about students and employees and what is not. Make sure your staff members know what information is restricted.

- Find out the filing deadlines for newspapers and television and radio stations in your community. You will get better coverage if you respect their time restrictions and plan to release your information accordingly.

- Your availability is a critical factor in getting good coverage. Respond to calls from reporters as promptly as possible. Reporters have relatively inflexible deadlines. If you cannot respond right away (and no one else can handle the call), have your secretary phone to find out the reporter's deadline, and to let him or her know the approximate time you will be available. If you miss that deadline you will miss the opportunity to get out your side of the story. You may also appear to be trying to hide something—never a good impression to leave with a reporter.

- Treat all reporters equally. Do not play favorites or allow one reporter to always scoop the others. However, if a reporter calls you

and initiates a story, don't call all the others and share that reporter's story idea.

- Treat reporters as the professionals they are. Most go through the same amount of education and training as educators and make about the same amount of money (at least newspaper reporters do). Like educators, reporters work long hours and deserve respect.

- Treat reporters as you would any community member inquiring about your school. Take a personal interest in them, find out if they have children and where their children attend school.

- Don't tell a reporter how to do his or her job. Don't be like the administrator who handed the reporter a list of the questions he could ask the students, thus setting a negative tone for what should have been a positive story. You do not have the right to read or see a story before it is printed or broadcast. Once the story is under way you have to trust the reporter's judgment and let him or her know that you are available to answer questions.

- Tell the truth. Understandably, you may want to put your spin on the actions or events in question, but never lie. A false statement invariably comes to light and the person who uttered it has damaged his or her personal credibility, as well as that of the institution. Lying to a reporter will always come back to haunt you!

- Be prepared to be disappointed occasionally. The most interesting and photo-attractive event in school history will go uncovered (even when you've been told it will be covered) if a story of greater dramatic impact (a train wreck or freeway pile-up) or news interest (a bank robbery or political crisis) breaks at the same time. Be a good sport and let the reporter or editor know you understand.

- Avoid "no comment" replies. If you can't respond, explain why. Say, "I can't respond to that because it's a confidential personnel matter" or "That matter is under investigation and I'm not free to respond at this time" or whatever the truth is.

- Cultivate a working relationship with reporters during good times. Go out of your way to cooperate and provide information so that a mutual trust level is established. Then when a crisis hits, they will likely be willing to work with you to present a fair story. Dartmouth (Massachusetts) Middle School has an ace in the hole: The editor of the local weekly is a former student who goes out of the way to cooperate with them.

- Learn media terminology such as *press* versus *media*, *deadline*, *cutline*, *byline*, *off the record*, and *not for attribution*.

- Don't ever say anything off the record. Respond as if what you say is being taped—because, ultimately, you have to take responsibility

for everything you say. If you are not prepared to see your words in print or hear them on radio or television, don't say them, because once you have spoken, you can never take back those words.

- Invite reporters to speak to student journalism classes or clubs and with the faculty or PTA/PTO about the news business. Give them a chance to talk about themselves and share their experiences. Most reporters are intensely curious and are "people persons" who enjoy talking about what they do.
- Drop a note or pick up the phone once in a while to thank a reporter for a positive story about your school, or just to touch base.
- Have a small, unobtrusive tape recorder at your side and record all interviews. Not only does this help you review and improve your media technique, it is your insurance policy if you are seriously misquoted or if there is a substantial error in the resulting story. If you are talking to a newspaper reporter face-to-face, say, "I'm going to tape this (also) if you don't mind." Many newspaper reporters now record interviews, in addition to using their traditional spiral notepads.
- Above all be honest, fair, and courteous. In this relationship, as in all others, the Golden Rule really does apply.

Getting Your Story to the Media

There are several ways to get your story out, but for most educational leaders, the easiest way is to call a reporter directly or prepare a news release. (If you have already cultivated a relationship based on mutual trust, you won't have a problem getting through to the reporter or having him or her return your call.)

If you plan to call a reporter with your story, be sure you call before critical deadlines. If you are hoping for a photo, you will probably have to let the reporter know about the event at least two days in advance so a photographer can be scheduled. It is best to use the phone for unplanned stories or emergencies and then back up your call by sending a fax with the same information, or handing the reporter a prepared news release when he or she arrives. That way you can be sure names are spelled correctly and other critical information is accurate. Reporters are busy people and don't always have time to take notes over the phone.

A fax machine is an incredibly useful tool, especially if you do not have time to mail your release or if the story is breaking the same day. Along with a phone call, a fax provides complete information for the reporter and allows him or her to move swiftly on the story.

Another excellent tool, particularly in small communities with weekly newspapers, is the tip sheet. This contains a schedule of upcoming events and is sent out on a regular basis to all the local media. Of course, a follow-up phone call is also a good idea.

The local Aurora, Ohio, weekly newspaper has a mailbox in Aurora High School's mail room. A reporter stops by to pick up information on a regular basis. Many of the articles printed come from the school's monthly newsletter.

News conferences at the school building level should be called only in very special circumstances or in extreme emergencies—and only if you are very confident of your media skills. A news conference is generally used in situations where you need to get important information to all the media at once. However, due to advanced technology in computers and fax machines, these are often faster and sometimes more reliable.

Writing a News Release

The news release has long been a communications standard for getting information to all media sources in a timely fashion. But a vague, poorly written, uninteresting news release that fails to catch the reporter's eye most likely will end up in the "round-file" next to the reporter's desk.

News releases should be used judiciously and written in a manner that simplifies follow-up for the reporter. Keep in mind that reporters are inundated with stacks of news releases every day from people like you competing for space or time. If yours does not stand out from the others, it is unlikely to be considered for that day's news mix.

Remember: A good news release deals with news. If it is not news, and if it is not of general interest to the reading or listening public at large (not just to members of the immediate school community), it does not belong in a news release. Avoid editorializing in your release. An opinion about the event (such as the superintendent's comments in the example at the end of this chapter) should be given in the form of a quotation by a cited source.

Another of the keys to an effective news release is to make sure that it is timely. A release about a week-old event is history, not news. When possible, send out your release 5 days to a week in advance. Then call to check if the reporter received it (it may be lying unopened on the desk). One way to get the reporter's attention is to print a special news release envelope that identifies it as such. To further catch the reporter's

eye, you might consider using a neon-colored envelope that stands out in a stack of mail.

If you know the name of the reporter who covers education news, send the release to that person's attention. Otherwise, send it to the attention of the editor (newspaper) or news editor (radio/television).

Finally, don't be disappointed if all your news releases aren't used—neither are anybody else's. There is strong competition for news coverage, and education is not the only topic in which the public, or the media, is interested.

Content of a News Release

A good news release contains the following information:

- A *date* line, a *contact* line, and a *for release* line. Instructions on how to write these are included in the next section, "Guidelines for Preparing the News Release."
- An interesting lead sentence and paragraph. The questions the reporter will be thinking are, "Why should I care about this? What's the point?" State clearly up front what makes the story unique.
- Answers to the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how*.

Also:

- If the story deals with a current hot topic, include details even if it takes several pages. Once you have hooked the reporter with the lead, he or she will appreciate the background information because it will save research time.
- Cover the facts but avoid editorializing—that is why news organizations have editors on staff.
- Reporters are always interested in money-related items and the number of people that the event/program/incident affects.
- If there are several activities associated with an event, include a brief program outline and note the best times for photo opportunities.
- Check and double-check that your information is accurate, that names are spelled correctly, and that addresses and times are correct. Most errors in news stories can be traced back to the source.

A sample news release is inserted at chapter's end. Also included is a Media Contact Form from the Washington Elementary School District (Phoenix, Arizona) that is used to keep school and district administrators informed when another member of the staff has media contact. This contact is often unplanned, but it is a good idea for staff to inform you and for you to keep a record of it. A third News Release

Form, from Durango (Colorado) School District, is included, as well. This is a within-the-district form to be filled out and given to the district's director of public information to start the process of issuing information to the media. It is an 8½ × 5½ inch NCR (no carbon required) form that allows you to keep the back (yellow) copy for your records.

Guidelines for Preparing the News Release

- All releases should be typed double-spaced on 8½ × 11 inch paper. Use one side only.
- Use wide margins to provide editing room.
- Use school letterhead (or even plain white paper) with "News Release" typed in bold across the top. Special news release letterhead is also available for purchase. Do not use cutesy graphics or unnecessarily clutter the page. The key is to present information in a clear, concise, easy-to-read, professional format.
- Always use the same format for your releases—same heading, paragraph indentations, and margins so that your style will look professional and be easily recognizable. Simplify punctuation and adhere to the same spelling and capitalization style. Get a copy of the *Associated Press Stylebook* and use it as a guide.
- The *date* line states the date the news release is issued by the school.
- The *contact* line gives the name and telephone number of a contact person who can provide additional information about the event (usually whoever generates the release) and, if appropriate, the names and phone numbers of others who are knowledgeable about the story and who are willing to be interviewed.
- The *for release* line announces the date you wish the news media (whether newspaper, radio, or television) to print or broadcast the information. In the example at chapter's end, the *for release* date states "immediate" because the event has just occurred and there is no need or reason to hold the announcement. *Immediate* means the media is free to use the release upon receiving it. Some news items may need to be sent to the media prior to the date you want the item announced—for instance, the announcement of a special award or the appointment of a new principal. In which case, the *for release* line should read "Hold until Thursday, Jan. 24, 1993" or "Embargoed until . . . ." If radio and television stations are included in the distribution of the release, you should also put a time on the release, such as "Embargoed until 11 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 24, 1993" or "Hold until . . . ." This is important because

unless a specific time for release is indicated, radio and television may use the item on a morning or noon news broadcast prior to its desired release time.

- If at all possible, news releases should be kept to one page. If the story is of such importance or detail that more than one page is needed, put "–More–" at the bottom of the first page, indicating that the item continues to another page. At the top of the second page, put "Page Two," the date, and the title line of your release, followed by "(Continued)." Drop two or three spaces and continue with your copy.

One way to avoid writing a longer news release is to put "Editor Note" at the end of the release indicating that more information is attached. As in the case of the sample release, the editor can lengthen the story with the names of the students and other details about the event, including a picture if interest and space permit.

Don't make the mistake of thinking you can trick the editors into printing more of your story than they wish by writing a longer news release. If your release is so long that there is not space for it, it might not get used at all. Or if the release has to be edited to fit the space available, key points might end up being left out.

- Do not hyphenate at the end of a line, and do not break a paragraph from one page to the next.
- At the end of the release, place "-30-" or "-End-." These are journalistic conventions that indicate to the editor that this is the end of the release copy. It is also acceptable to use "##" to indicate the same thing.
- If you are enclosing a photograph, identify the subjects from left to right on a typed label placed on the back of the photo. Do not write on the photo because the pressure of pen or pencil may disfigure the picture.

Preparing a Media Tip Sheet

The tip sheet is a weekly or biweekly schedule of events and activities involving the school. It advises reporters and editors of a variety of possible story-generating items, and allows them to pick and choose those they wish to cover depending on interest, space, and deadlines. The tip sheet can also be sent to the superintendent and governing board, employee and parent organizations, and posted in the faculty/staff lounge to apprise everyone of upcoming events. (A sample News Tip Form used by Washington School District is shown at the end of this chapter. This particular one was originally printed on blue paper.)

When you create a tip sheet be sure to:

- Use a different masthead for the tip sheet than the one you use for news releases so that a reporter can easily distinguish between the two.
- List events and activities in calendar order. Each item is preceded by its day, date, and time.
- Write a brief description about the event or activity (only one or two lines), including location if off campus. Include the name and phone number of a contact person for that event.
- Make a note that the event is a good photo opportunity, if that is the case.
- List holidays and classroom activities that make good holiday features such as kindergarteners dressed as Pilgrims and Indians for a Thanksgiving feast, students operating mock voting booths on election day, Abe Lincoln visiting school for Presidents Day, and students reciting appropriate speeches on Martin Luther King Day or on Cinco de Mayo. This makes great filler material that reporters know is always popular with the public.

Writing a Public Service Announcement (PSA)

Television and radio stations are required by the Federal Communications Commissions (FCC) to run a certain number of public service spots each week. These brief announcements are free of charge and are often overlooked as a way to get information to the public about education. You can use PSAs to highlight American Education Week or to announce a special event such as a community concert at your school or an annual PTA fund-raiser. (A typical public service announcement is printed at the end of the chapter.)

- If your district or school has a special letterhead for issuing news releases, PSAs, and so on, use it. If not, regular district or school letterhead is perfectly acceptable. If you are using regular letterhead, be sure to put "Public Service Announcement" across the top of the page.
- The *date* line is the date the PSA is sent out by the school.
- The *contact person* line should give the name of the person who can provide additional information about the event, or who is authorized to speak for the district or school in commenting about the event, not simply the person in charge. A telephone number should always be included. Obviously, the person listed as the contact should be made aware in advance and be prepared to answer inquiries.
- The *topic* line should give the station editor a clear indication of the subject of the PSA.
- The *date of event* line is self-explanatory.

- The *requested air dates* means the date(s) you wish the radio or television station to broadcast your PSA. In the example, the dates indicate approximately a 2½-week period prior to the event. This tells the station that it has some latitude in which to fit in the airing of the PSA. Obviously, you hope the station will air it more than once, but this may not happen. The greater lead time and the longer period of requested airdates you list, the better your chances of getting your PSA aired. Remember, the station must first record your PSA, then schedule a time to run it. A last-minute PSA is likely never to make it past the first person who reads it.
- Unlike a news release, a PSA would never be embargoed as to airtime. A PSA is not news; it is a request for the station to air information that you would like the general public to know, but for which you would not purchase airtime. Think of a PSA as a free commercial. But remember—because it is free, the station has no obligation to run your particular PSA. Unless the station's market is very small, it will likely have many more requests for PSAs than it has airtime to give away.
- The length of your PSA is very important. It must be 10 seconds or 30 seconds or 60 seconds in length (as read by an announcer). You want to get your story told in the shortest workable amount of time. Keep it clear and simple. Don't write a 60-second PSA for something that could be covered in 30 seconds.
- Type the copy in all capital letters and double space. PSA copy should be very clear and precise about what you want someone to know or do. Write the announcement the way you would say it. Read the copy aloud and clearly—more than once—to make sure it is understandable and no longer than the length requested. Remember that what may make sense on paper does not always come across clearly when read aloud.

An announcer at the station is either going to record your PSA for later broadcast (radio) or read it over the air (television). Sometimes on television PSA copy may be aired in written form to be read by the viewer from a community bulletin board type of format. This is especially likely in areas served by cable television companies. In any case, write the PSA exactly as it should be read and do not exceed the prescribed length. If it has to be edited, it may not be used at all.

Dealing With Newspapers

Familiarize yourself with the various newspapers that cover your community. Many major dailies now publish zone editions that concentrate

on local community news. Different reporters will cover these zone editions, so make sure you know who they are. This is where education stories of general local interest will usually be printed. If your paper publishes by zones, find out the deadline for your particular zone, as well as the deadline for the main edition. You also need to find out the paper's policy for printing stories in both the zone and the main edition. Most papers will run your story only once and will not look kindly on two reporters covering the same story—and neither will the reporters.

Learn the deadlines for special sections of the paper such as the community calendar. These sections usually have longer lead times because they are printed weekly, but they provide an excellent resource for notifying the community about upcoming school events.

If your paper has a regular education column, volunteer to write a guest editorial. Call the editor and ask what kind of education stories would be of interest to the paper and then submit feature story ideas on a regular basis. Although the majority of your ideas may not be used, chances are one or two will make an impression and find their way into print.

Although large daily papers will generally assign a photographer if a photo is warranted, most weekly papers will accept good quality black-and-white photos for publication. Find out their policies for accepting photographs and the standards they require. You might even get your photo printed with your own byline.

Using Television Effectively

Competition for television airtime is very intense in a large market that contains more than one school district. A half-hour local news segment contains on the average only 11 minutes of actual news time, and this is split between local, state, and local tie-ins to national news. Your story must have strong community interest in order to get aired. If you are located in a small community where the school is the hub of activity for residents, you stand a better chance of getting regular, positive coverage of school programs.

There are several keys to using television effectively:

- Remember that television is a visual medium and event-oriented. When proposing stories, always suggest a visual angle. Don't waste time with nonvisual stories or boring ones (proclamations, presentations, and the like). Only one school's Arbor Day ceremony or food drive will be covered, so be first or have a different twist. However,

television uses lots of tape, so opportunities are there if you present unique story ideas.

- Check out the lead time each station requires. Provide complete information about the story including time, duration, specific location, directions, and contact person. Use the phone with discretion, as TV assignment-desk staff are busy people.

- Target daytime story coverage. Most television stations these days are on tight budgets and employ limited personnel. As a result, night events are more difficult for them to cover and crews are generally sent to cover only the more dramatic stories, such as crisis situations or crime scenes. Exception to this are major sport events at the high school level.

- If the station sends a cameraperson to your event without a reporter, be sure to give the cameraperson a copy of a news release containing the details of the event. This ensures your story will run with complete and accurate information. Be nice to the camera operator. He or she can make you look really good—or really dumb!

- Unlike newspapers, there is probably no specific reporter assigned to cover education. You need to know who the news directors and assignment editors are at the local stations, because they are the ones you contact and the ones who decide which stories get covered. Find out if there are special types of education/school stories in which they are interested.

- Take advantage of the station's community calendar and public service announcement options. Talk with the station's public service director about PSAs on issues of concern to the community, such as parental involvement, drug abuse, and dropout prevention. Use the community calendar for upcoming events that might not warrant special coverage (open house, kindergarten registrations). Community calendars are prevalent on local cable channels.

- Invite on-air personalities to be honorary spokespersons or guest celebrities for a community-oriented project or to speak to classes about their jobs (e.g., invite the weatherperson to a science class). Often they will bring a camera crew with them to showcase their station's community involvement, an important part of a station's advertising and promotional package.

Interviews: When It Is Your Turn on Camera

Television can be intimidating and uncomfortable when the lights are turned on you. Prior to your interview, anticipate questions and

review your possible responses. Decide in advance the most important points you want to get across and try to focus on them throughout the interview. The key is to appear poised and competent. Often the reporter will ask you the questions in an informal format before the cameras start to roll. Use your responses at that time to prepare for the real thing.

- Use concise answers no longer than 20 or 30 seconds. Avoid jargon.
- State the most important information first, and emphasize those points. Because only short segments of the interview will be used, use a headline approach: "The most critical issue here is . . ."
- Rephrase long or loaded queries into questions you can or want to answer. Give positive responses.
- Think before you speak. Unless you are on a live show, you can take as much time as you need because the tape will be edited before airing.
- If you wish to drop the subject, build in a cutoff with your answer.
- Discuss only those activities and policies within your area of responsibility.
- If you don't know the answer, say so. If you can't respond, explain why and bridge into an area you want to discuss.
- Be consistent. Give the same answers to repeated questions. Repetition helps make your point.
- Avoid answering "what if" questions. Stick to the facts.
- Don't be guilty of a quick retort that you may regret later. Avoid sarcasm or attempts at humorous references. Be straightforward and professional.
- Avoid distracting mannerisms. Don't rock in your chair, pull at jewelry, say "er" or "uh," or cross your arms. Keep your face open and pleasant, make eye contact with the reporter, and use appropriate, but restrained, gestures.
- Stay relaxed, smiling, and positive.

Working With Radio

The key to having effective radio coverage is to have your message aired at the right time. Because radio stations broadcast 24 hours a day and include news coverage almost hourly, stories have a very limited life span. It also means that radio deadlines are tighter than those of television and newspapers. Millard South High School (Omaha, Nebraska) has found that, for immediate purposes, radio is the most effective media resource. Radio can be especially effective in small communities with few schools or school districts in the broadcast area.

Use the same techniques with radio reporters that you would use with television or newspaper folks. Just remember, you will hear the results a lot faster, so be prepared to deal with issues and questions raised by the radio report right away.

No one will see your face when you are on the radio, so be sure to speak clearly and distinctly. Stop talking after you have made your point or answered the question. Even if you are doing a radio interview by telephone, speak as if the reporter were in the room; make eye contact with something or someone while you are speaking.

There is a specialized radio format for just about every kind of listener, from classical to country music to the increasingly popular talk radio. Some markets are now experimenting with "kids radio," which will provide an excellent media opportunity for schools. Listen to the various stations in your area and note those that carry community-related information. Try pitching your story ideas to them first.

Here are some ways that you can use radio to tell your story:

- Announce emergencies concerning school openings, closings, and evacuations.
- Compile public service announcements about special events, programs, or issues of concern to the community.
- List community calendar events.
- Submit a topic and volunteer to be interviewed for an in-depth half-hour public service program. (Stations are required to do a certain number of these.)
- Sell the station on the idea of a monthly "Kids Show" featuring students.
- Volunteer to be on a call-in talk show dealing with an educational subject.
- Negotiate your own weekly or monthly radio program, if you live in a small or rural community.
- Offer to present a guest editorial.
- Don't forget to invite radio reporters to special school events. If you have a guest speaker or a choral event, the reporter may be able to record portions of the program to use on the air.
- Let the news director know that you are available to respond to educational issues in your community.

Tips for Talking to the Media

As an educational leader you may find yourself in a position of having to talk to a reporter when you are least prepared. When that happens, don't panic, and don't answer immediately. Take time to stop and think

first. If you are still uncomfortable with the question say, "I don't have that information right now, but I'll check to see if I can get it for you."

Following are some remarks prepared by Judi Willis, Mesa (Arizona) District Community Relations Director, that you might use as starting points for your comments when talking to the media:

- I'm not at liberty to discuss that topic at this time because it is an . . . (executive session matter, personnel matter, parent/student privacy issue, etc.) . . . but I'll be happy to supply the information when it can be made public.
- I don't have all the information on this subject. I recommend you contact the . . . (superintendent, board president, community relations director). If they can't help you, please give me a call back.
- We will follow our governing board's policies and take appropriate action after we have concluded our investigation.
- Because this is a personnel matter, I'm not at liberty to talk about every aspect of the situation.

After a crisis:

- We can't allow reporters on the campus to film or talk to our students about this situation. We have trained professionals talking with the students who are having problems. We believe it is in the best interests of our students to resume their normal routine as soon as possible.
- Although we feel badly about the students' education being interrupted, we won't tolerate this type of behavior in our schools.
- We share the community's concern over this, and will review our procedures to see how we can keep it from happening again.

Bill of Rights for the Radio/Television Interviewee

In interviews of a *spontaneous* nature, you have the right:

- To know who is interviewing you, and who he or she represents.
- To have total agreement by both parties of the ground rules, no matter how hastily arranged.
- To be treated courteously. The questions can be tough, but the reporter's demeanor should not be abusive.
- To have off-the-record comments, if previously stated, honored. (As a rule, never say anything off the record unless you know and trust the reporter completely.)
- To not be physically threatened or impaired by lights held too close or microphones shoved in your face.
- To break off the interview after a reasonable amount of time, but only after important questions have been answered.

In *prearranged* interviews, you have the right:

- To all of the previously mentioned.
- To know the general content, subject, and thrust of the interview, so you have time to research the appropriate information.
- To know approximately how long the interview will last.
- To know if there are other guests appearing with you on a talk or panel show, and what their roles will be.
- To have a public relations or other school representative present.
- To make your own audio- or videotape of the interview or to be able to obtain a complete tape from the radio/TV station.
- To make sure that no material is recorded by the reporter on audio or videotape unless you are told you are being recorded. The pre-interview discussion, conversation between commercials, or after-show chitchat cannot be used on the air unless you approve.
- To be allowed to answer without the constant harassment of interruptions (assuming your answers are brief and to the point).
- To ignore editorial comments or pejorative asides by reporters or panelists.
- To have an accurate on-air introduction that will put the interview in the proper perspective.
- To have the basic intent and flavor of your answers come across accurately in the edited version of the film or tape.
- To have time to get some of your points across in the interview, and not be expected only to answer the reporter's questions obediently and obsequiously.

When Answering Questions, Do . . .

- be relaxed, confident, and honest.
- maintain a neutral attitude.
- use pitch and rate changes for vocal variety.
- build in a cutoff with your answer if you wish to drop the subject.
- discuss only those activities and policies within the purview of your area of responsibility.
- admit you don't know an answer if that's the case. You can promise to get back with the answer; just be sure to deliver when you promise information.
- tape the interview yourself if the situation permits.
- use visual aids if you absolutely have to, but make sure they are simple, readable, uncluttered, and relevant to the subject.
- give positive answers.
- practice beforehand!

Don't . . .

- use jargon, acronyms, and technical terms.
- use speech mannerisms such as "er" and "ah."
- be curt, even with the dumbest question.
- answer more than one question at a time.
- restate the question.
- begin with gratuitous phrases such as, "I'm glad you asked me that."
- give a "no comment" response. If you are unsure of the answer or can't discuss it, say so.
- get into a verbal fencing match if it is classified information; admit that it is classified and move on.
- volunteer information unless it supports a positive point you want to make.
- be defensive.
- ever assume anything is off the record. There is no such thing unless you are absolutely certain the reporter will honor the agreement.
- let anyone put words in your mouth. Agree only if the facts and figures are the truth.
- lie. Answer as honestly and completely as you can. Your school and district's reputations rest on their spokespersons' veracity.

References and Suggested Readings

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[Use school letterhead,
unless a special letterhead is used for news releases]

NEWS RELEASE

DATE: APRIL 21, 1993 **FOR RELEASE:** IMMEDIATE
CONTACT: BILL TRAVIS, PRINCIPAL
MOUNT VERNON HIGH SCHOOL
537-5555

"MOUNT VERNON HIGH TAKES U.I.L. DISTRICT SWEEPSTAKES"

Students from Mount Vernon High School recently took first place in the District 14AAA University Interscholastic League competitions, held on April 19-20 at Winnsboro High School. Mt. Vernon won the district "Sweepstakes" trophy by accumulating a total of 943 points in 15 events. This marks the sixth time in the past 8 years that Mount Vernon has the won the overall trophy.

According to Superintendent Mike Harper, 21 students, representing all four grades, participated in the contests, which measure academic skills in a wide variety of competitive events. "We are extremely proud of our 'Academic Tigers' for their fine performances again this year. This 'Sweepstakes' win is a tribute not only to the hard work of the young people, but to the dedication of the teachers who served as their coaches. A lot of hard work by the entire team went into this victory."

Twelve students from Mount Vernon will now compete in various contests at the regional level. Regional competition will be held at East Texas State University the first week in May.

-End-

(Editor Note: Attached are (a) group photo of students; and (b) names of competing students, their events, and the overall student, school, and district scores.)

Washington School District
Media Contact Form

Name _____ Date _____

School/Department _____

Media Contacted
(list station or paper
& contact person): _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What's Happening:

Why:

Who's Involved:

When:

Where:

SOURCE: Washington School District, Phoenix, Arizona.

DURANGO SCHOOL DISTRICT 9R

News Release Form

CIRCLE ONE OR MORE:

Internal Newsletter | Newspaper | Photograph | Radio
District Newsletter | Magazine | Article

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Photograph _____ Story _____
Sent to newspapers _____
Sent to magazine _____ Radio _____

Used by newspaper(s):
Dates: _____
Used by magazine:
Dates: _____ Radio _____

WHO: _____

WHAT: _____

DATE: _____ _____ TIME: _____

WHERE: _____

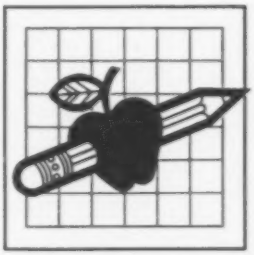
RESPONSIBLE PERSON: _____ PHONE: _____

YOUR NAME: _____

PRINCIPAL'S/SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

Please return this form to Carolyn Hoffman, Director of Public Information • 259-4176

SOURCE: Durango School District, Durango, Colorado.



News Tip Form

We want to keep the Washington School District community and our employees well informed of events and activities in the district. We know that there are LOTS of great things going on out there, but we need your help to find out the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHY!

Help us spread some good news. Fill out the form below when you hear of an event, a special project, a technique that works, or any newsworthy item in your school. Send it to Karen H. Kleinz, director of community relations, at the administrative center. For best results on upcoming events, please give at least two weeks notice.

Name _____ School or Department _____ Date _____

Who: (People, titles, grade(s), etc.) _____

What: (Event, award, project, etc.) _____

When: (Dates and times) _____

Where: (Place) _____

Why or how: (Reason for award, event, etc.) _____

If this is a future event, is it open to the public? ☐ Yes ☐ No

SOURCE: Washington School District, Phoenix, Arizona.

[Use school letterhead,
unless a special letterhead is used for news releases]

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

DATE: April 2, 1993
CONTACT PERSON: Bill Travis, Principal
Mount Vernon High School
537-5555
TOPIC: Mount Vernon High School 1993 Athletic Banquet
DATE OF EVENT: Thursday, April 22, 1993
REQUESTED AIRING DATES: Weeks of April 5-10; April 11-18; April 19-20.
LENGTH: 30 Seconds

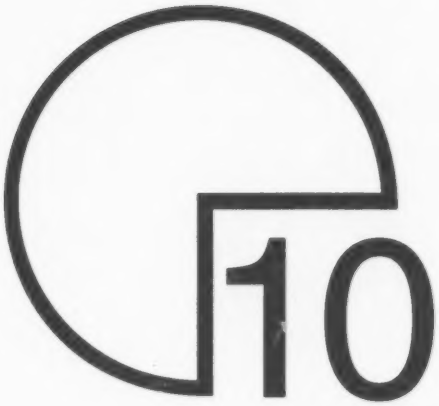
THE STUDENT ATHLETES OF MOUNT VERNON HIGH SCHOOL INVITE ALL INTERESTED TIGER FANS TO ATTEND THE 1993 ATHLETIC BANQUET.

THE BANQUET WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY, APRIL 22ND, AT 6:30 PM, IN THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA.

ADMISSION IS ONLY FIVE DOLLARS, AND INCLUDES A DELICIOUS CATERED BARBECUE DINNER.

TICKETS MAY BE PURCHASED AT THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICE, ON HIGHWAY 37 SOUTH.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL MOUNT VERNON HIGH SCHOOL, AT 537-5555.



CRISIS MANAGEMENT

"When anything can go wrong . . . and does!"

Society has always considered its schools to be safe havens for children, places where they can be free to learn in a protected environment. Unfortunately, the reality in today's world is that schools are no longer sacrosanct. They are no longer islands of safety within a community in turmoil, no longer immune from violence and the desperate acts of society. As a result, an educator must be prepared on a moment's notice to deal with a crisis situation involving the school.

Most districts define a crisis as any situation that threatens the safety and well-being of the school, students, or staff, either physically

or emotionally. All crises have one thing in common: They will likely involve the assistance of health or law enforcement agencies and, as a result, will attract the attention of the media. Thus there is the need to be able to communicate with your constituencies in a timely and appropriate manner.

Judy Wall, Communications Director for Federal Way (Washington) School District, explains the challenge this way:

> A crisis can impact a single building or the entire district depending on the nature of the crisis. The most important consideration when dealing with a crisis is the health, safety, and welfare of the students and staff—and prompt notification of parents. You have a greater chance of managing a crisis situation if you have a district-level plan, and an individual building plan that is based on the district plan.

Building level crises can take many different forms. Some typical examples might be:

- Accident/injury on campus
- Transportation accident (see Guidelines for Handling Specific Varieties of Bad News at chapter's end)
- Arrests on campus (see Guidelines for Handling Specific Varieties of Bad News at chapter's end)
- Fire (see Guidelines for Handling Specific Varieties of Bad News at chapter's end)
- Bomb threat (see Threat Call Checklist at chapter's end)
- Individual medical emergency
- Weapons incident
- Suicide (see Suicide Postvention Plan at chapter's end)
- Childnapping
- Assault
- Gang violence
- Racial/civic violence
- Chemical spill
- Power outage
- Poisoning
- Vandalism
- Gas leak
- Robbery
- Drug or alcohol incident or overdose
- Sexual molestation (on or off campus)
- Armed intruder or hostage situation
- Natural disaster (earthquake, flood, hurricane)

The first order of business in any crisis is to take control of the situation and protect the welfare of students and staff. The next step is to communicate the situation to parents and the community. A well-executed crisis plan will make the job of communicating easier and could even contribute to a swifter, smoother resolution of the crisis.

Credibility is your most valuable communication asset in a crisis. You must be prepared to deal openly and honestly with the community and the media to explain the situation and the steps being taken to remedy it. By being aboveboard with reporters and providing them with as many facts as possible, you add to your credibility and get your side of the story out. This is where a solid day-to-day communications effort pays off.

So the choices schools face in crisis management are (a) to be caught without a plan, in which case you are forced to communicate in a defensive mode; or (b) to be prepared in advance by having a crisis plan in place that allows you to communicate proactively.

Organizing a Crisis Planning Committee

The most successful crisis plans are those that are developed through the participation of the people who will actually be involved in carrying them out. Although crisis plans contain the same basic elements, each plan will vary slightly due to the unique needs of the school site, the makeup of the staff, and the resources available in the local community. The stronger the ownership that your team has in the plan, the more effective it will be in meeting the specific needs of your school.

Your district probably has a general crisis plan, and you will need to follow the guidelines set down there. However, that does not preclude the need for a building level plan. You will need to tailor the district's standard format to your specific school-site needs.

Begin by forming a committee of staff members. Ask for volunteers first so that you will be working with people who have a genuine interest. This committee's charge is to study potential crisis situations that might take place at your school and to develop an action plan. It is important that your planning committee be representative of key staff positions such as nurses, teachers, counselors, secretaries, and custodians. Be sure to invite a representative from the district office, as the district will play a critical support role in any crisis situation that your school has. At the high school level, you may also wish to include one or more student representatives. The more people you can involve

in studying and talking about possible crises and their impact on the school, the more prepared you will be when one actually hits.

Before you begin to write a plan, the crisis planning committee needs to analyze your school's crisis needs and gather supporting data and reference material.

- Brainstorm possible crisis situations. You should cover the gamut from a broken leg to food poisoning to a tornado or hurricane.
- Conduct an open-ended survey of staff members to determine their areas of concern. They may identify an emerging crisis or something the planning team overlooked. The survey may also indicate the most likely crisis situations to occur on your campus by the number of people concerned with a specific issue.
- Collect sample crisis plans from other schools and districts and from local businesses as well. Institutions such as hospitals often have plans that are excellent references for schools.
- Assemble all pertinent information about your campus. Include accurate maps of the building and extended campus, staff lists; special programs housed on site (disabled, preschool, self-contained, detention, etc.); building blueprints; location of fire hydrants, power boxes, circuit breakers, gas and plumbing controls, telephones, and anything else that might be needed in a crisis. (An Emergency Management Kit Checklist at the end of this chapter will help you assemble items needed for an emergency.)
- Invite local emergency service agencies (fire and police departments, city or county disaster relief agencies, etc.) to speak to your team (or, perhaps, even to the entire staff). Ultimately, your plan will be more effective if everyone's role is clearly understood.
- Gather historical data about crisis incidents that have occurred on your campus in the past and at other schools in your district. What happened? How was it handled? What was the outcome?
- Review state laws and regulations and district policies that apply to your emergency plan.
- Conduct a security audit of your campus. You may want to invite community agency representatives to assist with this effort.
- Once you have determined the various crisis situations your plan will address, divide your team into subcommittees and assign specific crisis topics to each (i.e., bomb threats, fire, natural disasters, accidents and medical emergencies, suicide, etc.).
- Decide on an appropriate format that each subcommittee will follow so that the action plan is presented in a consistent manner. A

standardized three-ring notebook is the most flexible format because it allows you to update and make changes easily.

Developing a Crisis Plan

It is interesting to note that the Chinese symbol for crisis incorporates the symbols for danger and opportunity. A good crisis plan allows you to deal with the danger and provides you with the opportunity to communicate the situation effectively.

Your crisis plan should contain at least the following 10 sections:

1. List of crisis team members, their phone numbers, and the chain of command. The principal is normally designated as the person in charge. A chain of command is important in case the principal or other team members are absent or incapacitated. The next name down the chain can then immediately assume responsibility for managing the crisis.
2. Description of procedures for the person in charge.
3. Identification of school area that can be used as a crisis center. It should have access to a phone or radio and is the area where crisis team members can be found.
4. List of crisis codes. It is helpful to establish a system of codes that all employees are familiar with so that students are not unduly alarmed and appropriate actions can be taken in a calm and orderly manner. Some schools use color codes (for example, "code blue") to signal over the intercom that there is an emergency, doors are to be closed, and students are not to be dismissed. For a less obvious signal, the announcement might be, "All registers are due in the office by 3:00 p.m.," or "Mr. Smith, please turn in your register to the office by 3:00 o'clock." This "register" signal was used at one school when a noncustodial parent was intent on reaching "Mr. Smith's" classroom. The classroom door could not be opened from the outside, and when there was no answer the parent left the school grounds. The school no longer uses registers, so that particular code word could not be misinterpreted.
5. Crisis assignments and descriptions of procedures for all personnel. Each crisis team member should be assigned specific tasks. Classroom teachers are responsible for their students and should remain with their classes throughout the duration of the crisis. All other staff members should have specific assignments. Those not needed for duties such as handling phones, securing files, and caring for the injured should be assigned to classrooms to assist teachers in caring for students. People are less likely to panic and will function more efficiently

if they have a clear, advance understanding of the role they will play during a crisis situation.

6. Evacuation procedures. You will need several different evacuation plans in anticipation of possible hindrances that block escape routes. You should also determine, in advance, an alternate off-campus site within walking distance to which students and staff can evacuate. This might be another school or church or business that has agreed to offer shelter in an emergency. Evacuation by bus should also be addressed.

7. Communication procedures. This should include designating a spokesperson to communicate with parents, relatives of staff, the community, and the news media. Vallivue High School (Caldwell, Idaho) has organized a telephone calling tree to keep staff members informed of what is happening. To update its staff, Georgetown (Texas) High School uses a computer calling system that can telephone all staff with a recorded message. (A sample Emergency Calling Tree for School Closings is included at chapter's end.)

8. Situation specific procedures. The list of possible crisis situations listed earlier in this chapter and the list generated by your crisis planning committee will help you identify areas that need to be addressed in detail. Procedures will vary for each type of incident, but simple, clear guidelines will assist you through almost any crisis.

9. Training procedures and evaluation drills. Make sure every staff member has a copy of his or her responsibilities and is completely familiar with the crisis plan. Conduct a training session at the start of each year and hold several refreshers during the year, much as you do a fire drill. Provide each member of the crisis team with a complete crisis procedure manual.

10. Provision for updating crisis plan at regular intervals.

School Crisis Team

The school crisis team should consist of people on your campus capable of assuming responsibility for managing components of the crisis, as well as other individuals as needed. These are the people who will initially be responsible for (a) responding to the immediate concerns and (b) notifying the appropriate people. These first two action steps must occur rapidly and in as organized and controlled a manner as possible. You will want people who are able to remain cool and rational during the crisis, as well as people with specific skills that would be of benefit to those involved. Suggested school crisis team members:

- Principal
- Assistant principal
- Secretary
- Lead foreman or custodian
- School nurse
- Counselor or social worker
- Staff members not assigned to a homeroom (e.g., P. E. teacher, librarian, art or music teacher)

The principal should serve as the head of the team and be designated the person in charge. Included at the end of this chapter is a sheet, Crisis Procedures for Person in Charge, to list important telephone numbers that you will need in an emergency. Keep those numbers close at hand.

Managing the Crisis

No matter what crisis occurs, the following action steps must be addressed for a successful resolution:

- Respond to the event by first meeting the needs of those involved and then containing the crisis.
- Notify the appropriate agencies and officials.
- Manage the crisis by following planned procedures until it is resolved.
- Communicate the situation to internal and external groups.

Once immediate needs have been addressed and the crisis is contained as much as possible, the crisis team should assemble to assess the facts of the situation. First, determine how much time you have to plan your response (the media will be at your door demanding explanations). Collect as much information as possible about what happened and assign someone to keep a written record. Make sure your team members all have the same facts about the crisis. In a crisis of long duration, the crisis team should meet at regular intervals for updates so that everyone continues to have the same information.

Communicating the Situation

Based on the information collected by the crisis team, determine what information is restricted and what your primary message should be. Analyze the possible outcomes and reactions of the public. Develop

a response to the crisis, and begin communicating. Don't shortchange yourself for time in reviewing and analyzing the situation, but it is important to get to this step as quickly as possible. All communication should be based on facts and should convey your concern about individual needs.

At this point your spokesperson should take over. If you have a communications specialist for your district, let him or her handle the situation. If not, a previously selected designee from the crisis team should act as spokesperson. This should be someone other than the principal or person in charge because his or her attention should be focused on the well-being of students and staff and on managing and resolving the crisis itself.

Don't ever assume the media won't find out a crisis is under way! Often a news reporter or TV camera crew will beat emergency crews to the scene. (In certain circumstances, instead of waiting for the media to show up, you can better support your efforts by contacting them directly with the facts of the situation.)

Instruct staff that all information is to be disseminated through the crisis spokesperson. No one should make any statement to the media without clearing it through the spokesperson or the person in charge. Any staff member approached by a member of the media should direct that individual to the spokesperson.

Following are some guidelines that the crisis spokesperson should keep in mind when dealing with the media:

- Your first priority is resolving the crisis.
- You have the right to set the ground rules in a crisis.
- Don't let reporters bully you.
- Stay calm and stick to your facts.
- Don't give more information than is necessary; it will only cloud the issue.
- Stay with your primary message—and keep repeating it.
- Don't attempt to conceal information that is a matter of public record.
- Be honest and explain the situation, along with the positive actions you have taken to resolve it.
- Don't be rude or discourteous to reporters (or anyone else), even if they are rude to you.
- Never give a "no comment" reply.

If the spokesperson is unable to answer the questions asked, here are several optional answers that may be of help:

- "No information is available at this time, but I'll get back to you as soon as I know something."

- "I cannot release that information at this time, but I will be happy to discuss it with you when I can."
- "That is under investigation at the moment, so I'm not free to discuss it further."
- "I will try and get that information for you. I will call you back later when I have the facts at hand."
- "We will release that information just as soon as we have been cleared to do so."

Communicating With Staff and Parents

Keep school staff updated as often as feasible during the crisis. Your crisis plan should provide several alternative methods of communication, and the situation will determine the best one to use.

The media will be able to assist you in communicating with parents during the crisis. If you have enough telephone lines, you may be able to set up a crisis hot line for parents to call or perhaps the school personnel can staff a phone bank. However, always keep one or two lines clear for emergency use.

Following the crisis, it is important that you communicate with parents as soon as possible, preferably the day of the incident. This is most easily accomplished by sending a letter home with students. You will have to move swiftly to prepare the letter and get it copied and distributed by the time students leave. The letter should briefly describe what happened and then focus on the steps you have taken to reestablish a safe environment and address the situation. Emphasize your concern and commitment to attending to the health and safety of your students. (Guidelines for Emergency Notification and Sample Letters to Students/Parents are enclosed at chapter's end.)

After the Crisis

Once the crisis is resolved and you have communicated with the appropriate constituencies, you still have work to do. Be available to answer questions and address the concerns of staff and parents following the crisis. At the earliest possible time, bring the crisis team together for a debriefing. Review your written log of events and study the effectiveness of your responses. Note the things that could have been handled differently and revise your crisis plan as needed.

Determine what support services are needed to deal with the aftermath. Arrange for counseling and psychological services for as long as necessary. When appropriate, create support groups for stu-

dents, families, and staff. Be as proactive as possible in meeting the personal needs of everyone involved in the crisis in order to bring the campus back to normal.

Project future consequences of the crisis. What ramifications will it have for your school next week, at graduation, on the anniversary of the event? What student behavior problems might occur in response? Anticipate the possible postcrisis responses by students and community members, and prepare a plan to address them proactively.

It is important to remember that no two crises are the same and that no plan, no matter how well prepared, will address every aspect of the situation. Plans provide guidelines by which to operate, as well as give you a starting point for taking control of the crisis situation. A crisis may not be avoidable, but it can be managed if the right decisions are made and the right actions are taken early.

But, of course, some crises are avoidable. A crisis may be prevented by taking the time to identify potential problem situations and correcting them. Very few crises are surprises to everybody in the organization. The simple act of closing the gate on a construction area, removing broken playground equipment, or really listening to a student's concerns could mean the difference between an addressable situation and a full-blown crisis. As the old saying cautions, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

References and Suggested Readings

Arizona School Public Relations Association. (1988). *Six pack of public relations ideas for superintendents* (Pocket folder). Phoenix, AZ: Author.

Baldwin, H. A. (1990). *Planning for disaster: A guide for school administrators*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

Hoffman, C. S. (1986, Summer). Tell it like it is. *Journal of ASBA*. (Newsletter available from Arizona School Boards Association, Phoenix)

Lukaszewski, J. E. (1987). Anatomy of a crisis response. *Public Relations Journal, 43*(1), 45-47.

National School Public Relations Association. (1986). *School public relations: The complete book*. Arlington, VA: Author.

Peters, T., & Waterman, R. H., Jr. (1982). *In search of excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies*. New York: Warner Books.

Guidelines for Handling Specific Varieties of Bad News

Bus Accident

- establish a reporting procedure from the scene with all drivers and transportation officials.
- be prepared to ask the questions to obtain the information you need. Consider having a standardized form on bus accidents next to your phone.
- have one central location where reporters can call with specific questions.
- don't draw hasty conclusions that students are not hurt. They can fool you before they're checked out.
- consider sending a letter from the school to parents of children on the bus.
- urge quick action against the bus driver if he/she is at fault. This preserves public confidence in your transportation system.

Arrest of School Employees on Criminal Charges

- don't react until you have the facts.
- confirm that the person is indeed a school employee. (You'll be surprised how often they aren't.)
- get pertinent details from official sources such as police or courts or the school personnel department. Those details may include the nature of the charges, if they occurred while the employee was on duty, the type of job held with the schools, length of employment.
- find out what, if any disciplinary action will be taken, and why. Examples: Suspension with or without pay, placement on administrative not classroom duty, transfer, removal.
- be aggressive getting this word to the public. It's painful but usually will die quickly if you don't stall.

"Spot News" Such as Fires, Injuries

- if it's during school hours, make sure there is a central number or contact for information.
- if it's after school hours, a spokesperson should go to the scene because reporters will not know how to reach you.
- immediate questions to answer: injuries, damage, causes, can school continue to operate normally.
- be aggressive with follow-up because you will need media assistance to get word to parents.
- when "the smoke clears" in the aftermath like a school fire, thank the media for their help.

SOURCE: "Media-Relations: Crisis to Non-Crisis," Myra J. Joines, Media and Public Relations Consultant, Matthews, North Carolina.

THREAT CALL CHECKLIST

Billings Public Schools
Billings, Montana

DON'T HANG UP THE PHONE

(USE ANOTHER PHONE TO CALL POLICE)

RECORD THE EXACT LANGUAGE OF THE THREAT _____

_____

_____

ASK:

WHEN IS IT SET FOR? _____

WHERE IS IT? _____

WHAT KIND OF BOMB? _____

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? _____

WHO ARE YOU? _____

VOICE ON THE PHONE:

MAN _____ WOMAN _____ CHILD _____ AGE _____

INTOXICATED _____ SPEECH IMPEDIMENT _____

ACCENT _____ OTHER _____

BACKGROUND NOISE:

MUSIC _____ CHILDREN _____ AIRPLANE _____ TALK _____

TRAFFIC _____ OTHER _____ TYPING _____ MACHINES _____

DON'T HANG UP PHONE,

USE ANOTHER PHONE TO CALL POLICE.

POLICE PHONE NUMBER 911.

PERSON RECEIVING CALL: IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY AUTHORITIES AND GIVE ABOVE INFORMATION, THEN NOTIFY PERSON IN CHARGE.

DATE _____ TIME OF CALL _____ RECEIVED BY _____

Greenwood School District 50

P.O. Box 248
Greenwood, South Carolina 29648
803/223-4348

Checklist
Emergency Management Kit

The following items are listed as a basis for creating and maintaining Emergency Management Kits in every school in Greenwood School District 50. The list includes specific items that may save time in implementing a school plan to manage emergencies. Additional items may be needed by individual schools and those should be added to the emergency kit, as well.

- ☐ 20 legal pads (8.5 × 11 and 4 × 5)
- ☐ 20 ball-point pens (not felt-tip and not pencils)
- ☐ 20 magic markers
- ☐ 500 plain white peel-off stickers (to be used to identify injured students or adults at the emergency site)
- ☐ list of telephone numbers for the district office, local law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, fire department, and other agencies that may need to know of a school crisis
- ☐ list of telephone numbers for the portable telephones used by district staff
- ☐ list of computer, BBS, and fax lines at the district office
- ☐ list of beeper numbers for district staff
- ☐ 1 local telephone directory
- ☐ 1 current staff directory for district
- ☐ floor plan that shows the location of all exits, all telephones and telephone wall jacks, computer locations, and all other devices that may be useful in communication during an emergency
- ☐ 1 fully charged battery-operated bullhorn
- ☐ local street and zone maps
- ☐ for all off-campus trips, a map showing the route to be traveled to and from the off-campus destination
- ☐ for all off-campus trips, a list of students and adults on each bus or vehicle should be left at the school; students and adults must ride the same bus both ways
- ☐ list of assigned roles for school personnel and district personnel
- ☐ recent lists of students who ride buses, given by bus/route number
- ☐ summary of information that can be made public during an emergency; include Freedom of Information summary, district policy, and others
- ☐ list of professional and community contacts for organizing a "crisis care team" of counselors, ministers, and others

GLENVIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL
EMERGENCY CALLING TREE FOR SCHOOL CLOSING

1993-1994
(revised 12/3/93)

Dr. Sean Wagemans informs: Dave Stewart 555-2869

Dave Stewart informs:

Adrienne Curry	555-4459
Spence Coleman	555-4090
Larry Lewis	555-7448
Janice Long	555-9921 (unlisted)
Karen Pope	555-1687
Brenda Thomas	555-4660

Adrienne Curry informs:

Caroline Case	555-4459
John David	555-2382
Charlotte Lauren	555-4090
Pete Long	555-7448
Kristen McKenzie	555-9921
Greg Washington	555-1687

Spence Coleman informs:

Phil Alexander	555-8700
Steve Douglas	555-4435
Nathan Dylan	555-7878
Gloria Furman	555-2845
Stan Harrison	555-9649
Susan Diane Ross	555-3451

Larry Lewis informs:

Jim Calle	555-4560
Gail Law	555-2238
Julie Leah	555-4582
Sharon Meyer	555-7488
Sandy Steffens	555-9121
Howie Stella	555-2997

Janice Long informs:

Karen Bryan	555-6785
Carolyn Clinton	555-3467
Jim Nelson	555-6834
Alison Piper	555-9862
Mark Sorsby	555-2644
Maybel Young	555-4401

Karen Pope informs:

Leona Beck	555-4459
Kathy Chowaniec	555-2382
Matt Englehorn	555-4090
Gary Lisciarelli	555-7448
Carlos Rodriguez	555-9921
Andy Ruocco	555-1687

Brenda Thomas informs:

Roz Bolger	555-8700
Bert Emmett	555-4435
Patricia Hensley	555-7878
Laura McDonald	555-2845
Wilson Peyton	555-9649
Julie Scott	555-3451

CRISIS PROCEDURES FOR PERSON IN CHARGE

Step 1 Call 911. If no response, immediately call:

Fire _____
Ambulance _____
Paramedics _____
Police/Sheriff _____

Stay on the line until first response vehicle arrives

Step 2 Label all injured persons with their names. Appoint staff member liaison to accompany injured persons.

Step 3 Notify Superintendent and Community Information Director of crisis situation.

_____ Office: _____
Superintendent Home: _____

_____ Office: _____
Community Information Home: _____

Step 4 If the Superintendent is not available, contact one of the Crisis Team members in the order listed below:

	Office	Home
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Step 5 Appoint staff member(s) to monitor phones.

Step 6 Implement appropriate crisis procedure.

SOURCE: Karen Kleinz, Washington Elementary School District, Phoenix, Arizona.

SUICIDE POSTVENTION PLAN

Steps to be followed after a student suicide:

1. Upon being made aware of a possible student suicide or other extreme tragedy involving students or staff, you must notify the building principal.
2. The principal will convene the school "crisis team."
3. The principal, with the aid of the crisis team, will verify the information concerning the death. All suicides are referred to as "deaths." A log will be kept of all communications.
4. The principal will contact the superintendent of schools and other schools which may have affected siblings.
5. When deemed appropriate, the crisis team will prepare a formal statement based on verified facts which is presented to the faculty with the intention that they read the prepared statement to students at a later time. The principal will contact parents in order to inform them that the school is aware of the student death, and a statement is to be read to students informing them of the death. It is the responsibility of the principal to contain the story and to protect the privacy of the family. NOTE: Some staff members may feel uncomfortable discussing a suicide with students. Respect their feelings and provide alternative opportunities for students.
6. The crisis team will notify all staff of a faculty meeting to be scheduled at the earliest possible time. If the death occurs on a weekend or evening, a phone chain will be utilized to inform the staff of a faculty meeting prior to school starting the next day.
7. The principal will inform staff of the student death and give each faculty member a copy of a prepared statement to read to all students at a designated time. All staff, including supportive staff, will be instructed to share no information with students other than the prepared statement, and efforts must be made to ensure that school functions in a normal manner.
8. All media inquiries will be directed to the building principal and media access to student body or staff will be denied. The building principal will be the sole spokesperson regarding the tragedy.
9. The counselors will provide a designated area for severely affected students to express their feelings of confusion and grief in a safe, supportive environment. Community agency personnel may also be used in this environment.
10. In addition to reading a prepared statement to students, staff will be instructed to refer troubled students to designated crisis centers. Students who were exceptionally close to the deceased will be

monitored and possible contact made through the crisis team to their parents.

11. Arrangements will be made for team members to meet with the classes of the deceased to allow for an awareness of the grief process and the discussion of student feelings.
12. The principal will designate two persons from the crisis team to inspect the student's locker and to make the contents available to the police. Teachers will return all student personal items to the principals. Do not destroy any personal materials of the student. Upon clearance from authorities, all student materials will be returned to the parents.
13. A post-staffing will be held the end of the first day to review the day's activities and to do appropriate planning for the next two days.
14. The student name will be removed from the student roll and records finalized.
15. After an appropriate amount of time, the principal and a member of the crisis team will visit the family of the deceased student.
16. The principal will encourage the parents to have the funeral as late in the day as possible. Although school will continue to operate, all students wishing to go to the funeral will be excused (with parental permission).
17. By approximately the third day, the designated crisis center will be closed and teachers should refer to individual counselors any students who are profoundly affected by the student's death.
18. Have a closure meeting of crisis team members upon resolution of the crisis to assess appropriate procedures and decide if adjustments need to be made in the process.
19. Suicide is not a heroic act, and therefore it should not be glorified or eulogized in any manner.

SOURCE: Magic City Campus High School, Minot, North Dakota.

Sample Letter to Students
(on Occasion of Suicide of Friend or Classmate)

Date

Dear [Name of Student]:

[Name of student]'s suicide on Thursday, May 4 touched all of us at _____ High School. Her death had a personal meaning for each of us and each of us responded to her death differently. There are no right or wrong emotions, but certainly many have been affected and changed by the experience.

Our lives are always diminished by the loss of someone close to us. When suicide has been chosen as the means to end one's life, we must acknowledge that, at that moment, our friend saw no alternative to resolving deep emotional pain. _____ chose a permanent solution to feelings and problems that are transitory in life's journey. She chose death rather than allowing herself the time to heal. She reached toward death instead of the help and friendship available to her.

Many of you may experience moments of depression. Having "down" days is not unusual at any age. But when these feelings continue and you find yourself (1) feeling tired all the time; (2) withdrawing from people and things that used to interest you; (3) allowing grades and attendance to slip; (4) getting upset and angry over little things; or (5) feeling lonely, hopeless, and resigned—please seek help from any of the people or agencies on the attached list [provide list of resources]. You may have a friend whom you are worried about who is very depressed. Please encourage that person to get help. It is important also that you let an adult know [a teacher, counselor, nurse, etc.]. You are not betraying a friendship or confidence when you seek help—you may be saving a life.

I am always available if you feel you need to discuss this with someone.

Sincerely,

[Principal or Counselor or Teacher]

SOURCE: Sigrid Taillon-Whitman, Public Relations Coordinator, Sunnyside Unified School District, Tucson, Arizona.

Guidelines for Emergency Notification

Letters sent home should include the following:

1. The Crisis; a statement of tragedy. Give basic facts.
2. Information on utilization of the school crisis team, District crisis team, and community resources.
3. Description of emotional signals child may exhibit.
4. Statement that parents should be sensitive and listen to child's reaction.
5. Name and phone number of contact person who can help with referral process to agencies, etc.
6. Name of person at school or District to contact re: questions and concerns.
7. If parent meeting needs to be set up, include date and time.

SOURCE: Sigrid Taillon-Whitman, Public Relations Coordinator, Sunnyside Unified School District, Tucson, Arizona.

Sample Letter to Parents
(on Occasion of Death/Accident)

Date

Dear Parents:

This letter is to inform you of an unfortunate death/accident that is having a deep effect on the students and staff at our school. [Details here.]

Members of the school and District crisis teams have been working with our students and staff members today. The teams will also be available at a parent meeting tonight in the library at 7:00 p.m. They will address concerns, answer questions, and assist you with support in dealing with your own and your child's grieving process.

We hope you will be able to attend. Please feel free to bring your children.

Sincerely,

Principal

SOURCE: Sigrid Taillon-Whitman, Public Relations Coordinator, Sunnyside Unified School District, Tucson, Arizona.

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